

NATIONAL
HERITAGE
CORRIDOR

In Touch

with The Last Green Valley



MEMBER MAGAZINE & 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

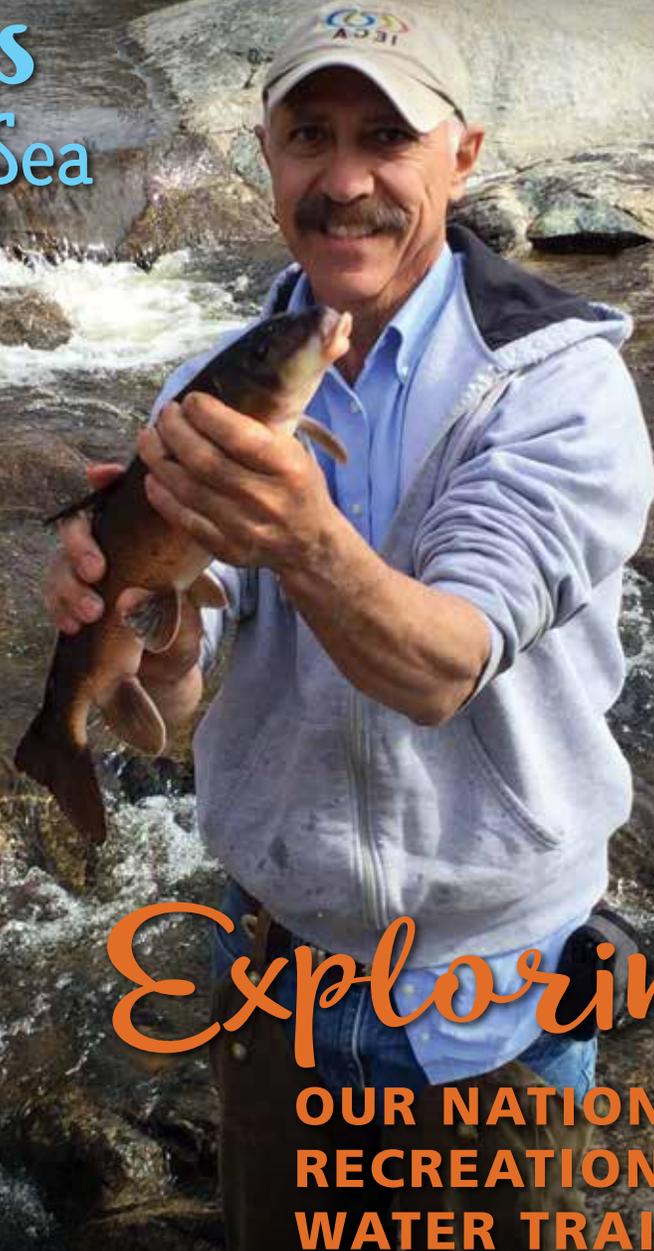
Connecting the Drops from Source to Sea

Trout in the
Balance

Access for All

Building
Bridges
by Cleaning Up

Water Quality
Monitoring
Volunteers
In Action



Exploring

OUR NATIONAL
RECREATION
WATER TRAILS

In Touch

Spring 2017

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Cover: Glenn Krevosky holding a white sucker during their annual spawning run in the French River, N. Oxford, MA. Photo credit M. Fugatt-Krevosky



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Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the third edition of your member magazine, *In Touch*, which also serves as our Annual Report for 2016.

2016 marked another successful year for The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV), and we are pleased to share our accomplishments with you through the pages of *In Touch*. With your help, we have continued to focus our resources on what we do best – connecting and inspiring people to care for, enjoy, and pass on The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor.

We hope you enjoy this issue's focus on our watershed, with stories ranging from brook trout restoration efforts to our new National Recreation Water Trail designation for the Shetucket River. Perhaps these articles will inspire you to become a water quality monitoring volunteer or to join us on a paddle. There is no better way to understand the issues in our watershed than by getting your feet wet.

Behind the scenes, we have worked hard to ensure the sustainability of this organization into the future. First, we established The Last Green

Valley Legacy Society for anyone who wishes to benefit The Last Green Valley in his or her will or estate plans, no matter the size or simplicity of the bequest. A legacy gift is a thoughtful way to ensure that all the things you love about The Last Green Valley live on. We hope that if your bequest plans include The Last Green Valley, you will let us know so we can add your name to the list. You can remain anonymous if you wish, or you may let us publicize your name to inspire others.

Second, we have made it easier for you to participate in the long-term impact of this organization by ensuring that any bequest or gift you make will benefit this region into the future. We partnered with the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut to establish two endowment funds in our name. These funds will perpetuate our vision, increase our visibility and capacity to secure major gifts, and allow us to obtain high quality investment management services. We invite you to contact us, or contact

representatives from the funds directly, to learn more about them.

We did not do any of these things alone. To all of our members, donors, sponsors, volunteers and partners, thank you! Your support makes our programming possible and improves the quality of life in our communities. Your support for our new endowment funds will ensure that we remain a uniquely rural, historic, and thriving region for generations to come.

We work for you in the National Heritage Corridor, and we not only value your support, but your input. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, or would just like to chat about our work, please contact Lois Bruinooge or me through the office at 860-774-3300.

We look forward to connecting and inspiring even more people in 2017. Together, we can care for, enjoy, and pass on The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor!



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Jean Pillo, Water Quality Monitoring
and TRBP Coordinator

Connecting the Drops



J. Pille

from Source to Sea



Water made The Last Green Valley special. It cut its way through rocks and forests and valleys, carving out babbling brooks, swift streams and powerful rivers that became the economic engines of the colonies and the nation all the way into the mid-1900s.

While the National Heritage Corridor's waters power very little industry today, they are still the arteries pumping life throughout the region, a fact recognized by The Last Green Valley for more than a decade. Conservation of natural resources has been a mission of the National Heritage Corridor since it was designated in 1994. The focus on water blossomed in 2006 when the Corridor hired Jean Pillo and began partnering with the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District to oversee water quality monitoring programs. In that first year, 8 sites along the French River were tested for water quality. In 2016, 71 sites on streams and multiple sites on 7 lakes were monitored.

In 2009, Bill Reid, TLGV's chief ranger, led TLGV's effort to partner with a number of organizations to create Source to Sea, where volunteers paddled virtually the entire Thames River watershed. The project was meant to highlight both the recreational opportunities and the interconnectedness of the watershed.

Pillo said the average person really does not think about the watershed. Everything from how the water gets in their wells, to what happens to the waste they put into their septic systems is a mystery. The water quality monitoring program is part of a multi-pronged approach to change that.

Ziggy Waraszkiewicz of Charlton said he has come to realize through his water quality testing efforts just how connected the watershed really is. "I like to take a map of The Last Green Valley and I circle where we are up in Charlton and then I point to Long Island Sound. What we do up here in Charlton ends up in Long Island Sound. People don't think about it, but once you see it, it changes how you look at the water."

Because of that interconnectedness, water quality monitoring is critical, Pillo said. In some ways the challenges faced by the waterways today are more complex than they were decades ago, before the Clean Water Act of 1972. "The Willimantic River used to turn colors depending on the dye being used at the textile mills," Pillo said. "That river is a great success story."

Chris Bellucci, an environmental analyst with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, said when industrial sources were causing visible pollution of the rivers, everyone could see the problems and understood where the sources of the problems were. "We don't have problems with rivers turning purple or green anymore, but in a sense it's more of a challenge. It's the stuff you can't see that is causing the troubles we have. It's more nonpoint source pollution. We have to find the problems and then figure out where they are coming from."

Bellucci notes that the current era requires strong volunteer programs, such as the one Pillo and TLGV run.



Clockwise from left: Paddling the Quinebaug River; Woodstock Academy teachers Lauren Cremers and Susan Lovejoy search for pollution-sensitive bugs in the Yantic River; and a "most-wanted" roach-like stonefly found in a Chaplin stream.

"WE HAVE A REALLY NICE RIVER AND IT'S UNDER-UTILIZED. WE WANT TO GET PEOPLE OUT THERE ON IT. IF WE GET THEM ON THE WATER, THEY WILL BECOME INVESTED IN IT."

Neal Hagstrom, a fisheries biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

"The Last Green Valley provides us with really good information. They are well trained and they are really good volunteers. They contribute a lot and they create local interest in why [people] should care about a stream, and that's really important."

Like the Willimantic River, the Quinebaug River is another good example of the Clean Water Act's success. The Quinebaug is much cleaner today than in the past, when it also turned color with each dye lot. But volunteer monitoring has also shown the Quinebaug River still has threats to its health. Pillo said, "Stormwater runoff is the major issue. The river is not meeting recreational standards after it rains." In other words, swimming after a downpour would not be a good idea.

On a positive note, water quality monitors have spotted, for the first time, triangle floaters in the stretch of the Quinebaug that passes through Putnam. Triangle floaters are fresh water mussels that are important indicators of river health. The area is perhaps the river's most urban stretch, surrounded by pavement on both sides, and triangle floaters had not been documented in the area before.

Pillo said she also is closely watching the Natchaug River, which is arguably at the opposite end of the water quality spectrum. The Natchaug is considered a trophy trout stream and a benchmark for water quality. "It's not a perfect river, but it's the least impacted river system in our area," Pillo said. "There's a lot of state forest and a lot of preserved land around it. The land wasn't good for agriculture so it didn't get cleared. It's one of our most pristine waterways." As development begins to creep in however, TLGV volunteers have noted rises in water temperature in some areas of the Natchaug. As a trophy trout stream, those rises could be catastrophic for the fishery. "A small fluctuation can mean big trouble for a cold water fish," Pillo said. "If we want to maintain the Natchaug as a trophy trout stream we have to address the causes of the temperature increases."

Neal Hagstrom, a fisheries biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), believes that keeping the Natchaug and other streams healthy can once again make the waterways economic drivers. "I feel like there are some untapped opportunities in The



Last Green Valley. It's an hour from Hartford, an hour from Providence and even closer to Worcester. There's an opportunity for a water recreation business — rentals, tubing. There are some fishing guides making a decent living. It's not going to get someone rich, but there's opportunity."

Hagstrom's belief comes from a 2015 survey of the Quinebaug River conducted by DEEP. "We have a really nice river and it's underutilized," Hagstrom said. "We want to get people out there on it. If we get them on the water, they will become invested in it."

Bellucci said the state cannot do the bulk of the work needed to prevent nonpoint source pollution and increase use of the rivers on its own. Because both Massachusetts and Connecticut are home rule states, the real work must happen with local officials. The volunteer water quality monitoring program is the best asset to spread knowledge and create change, he said. "The volunteers are there in the community. They can tell their families and their neighbors what they're doing and why, they can talk to town government and hopefully that starts to have some impact."



Left: Water quality monitors have an eye on you. Above: Lisanne Tholl sorts bugs along a stream in Chaplin.

Because Pillo works with TLGV, the conservation district, and a broader coalition of organizations called the Thames River Basin Partnership, she is able to use the data collected by volunteers to help track down sources of contamination and make recommendations for solutions. Several stormwater cleanup projects have been funded and completed because of the data collected by TLGV water quality monitoring volunteers.

Lois Bruinooge, TLGV's executive director, believes that collaboration is critical to the organization's conservation efforts. "We can extend the impact of our volunteer water quality monitoring program by working with a wide range of partners," Bruinooge said. "Those partnerships can and do help translate information collected by our volunteers into action."

Source to Sea

Make a Sound Choice



Top 10 Ways You Can Prevent Water Pollution

In order to create better brooks, restored rivers and a healthier Long Island Sound, please make a personal pledge to:

- ◆ Use fertilizers sparingly (choose slow release formulas) and sweep up driveways, sidewalks, and gutters.
- ◆ Never dump anything down storm drains or in streams.
- ◆ Vegetate bare spots in your yard to prevent soil erosion.
- ◆ Compost vegetable and yard waste.
- ◆ Use least toxic pesticides, follow labels, and learn how to prevent pest problems.
- ◆ Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces and consider a rain garden or rain barrel to capture runoff.
- ◆ Wash your car on the lawn or take it to a commercial carwash instead of washing it in the driveway.
- ◆ Check your car for leaks and recycle your motor oil.
- ◆ Pick up after your pet and don't attract waterfowl by feeding them.
- ◆ Have your septic tank pumped and your system inspected regularly.



BONUS

Become a volunteer water quality monitor in The Last Green Valley!

HEY KIDS!

Join Flo in preventing water pollution!



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J. Pillo

WATER QUALITY MONITORING VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

Diane Angotta sat in the rain this fall, alongside a secluded stream as dusk was closing into night, when she finally rejoiced. After hours of finding streams dried up from drought, Angotta and a fellow volunteer found a stream that survived the dry summer and fall, and in it they found a bug whose presence meant the water was clean. “It was one of our best finds,” said Angotta, who lives in South Windham. “Whether the state agreed with us when they analyzed it, I don’t know. But, it was pretty exciting for us.”

“We also realized we should bring headlamps with us,” Angotta added.

Angotta is one of The Last Green Valley’s water quality monitoring program volunteers and she enjoys

spending her time searching for critters the rest of the world might overlook. The work Angotta does is called Riffle Bioassessment for Volunteers, or RBV for short. Using nets to collect underwater bugs, volunteers sort and identify them before sending samples to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for confirmation.

RBV testing is just one kind of water quality monitoring the TLGV volunteers conduct, but is critical to determining the health of the watershed. “Some of these bugs are very sensitive to pollution,” said Jean Pillo, TLGV’s volunteer water quality monitoring coordinator. “If we find them we have a pretty good indication of the stream’s health. If we don’t find them,

there’s a reason to take a deeper look. Those bugs are a critical step in the food chain for the fish and the fish feed the eagles,” Pillo said. “The bugs aren’t pretty, but they are important.”

RBV testing has been hampered the last two years by drought conditions, which also pose a risk to the watershed. Once a habitat is no longer viable because of drought, even after the water returns it may take years for the fish to make their way back up to the headwaters.

Jack Josti has been monitoring streams with The French River Connection for five years. “When I first started, I didn’t even know where these places were, and now I can almost understand what’s happening with the river when

“The bugs aren’t pretty, but they are important.”

Jean Pillo, TLGV’s volunteer water quality monitoring coordinator

I see it," Josti said. The French River Connection volunteers sample water chemistry instead of using RBV because Massachusetts environmental agencies prefer that approach. Through years of testing, Josti said he and the other volunteers are seeing a slow build-up of conductivity and salinity. The two are closely tied together as conductivity can be directly linked to an increase in dissolved salts and inorganic materials, such as alkalis, chlorides, sulfides and carbonate compounds. Both conductivity and salinity can negatively affect freshwater aquatic life. "Those are the things we're keeping an eye on and the temperature seems to be creeping up from year to year," Josti said. "We're building up the years of data so we can really understand what's happening."

In addition to the RBV and water chemistry monitoring, 14 volunteers formed into three teams to collect water samples from 14 sites that were analyzed for E. coli bacteria. Volunteers also collected a second year of water samples and tested for bacteria at canoe and kayak launches along the Quinebaug River. There are also volunteers monitoring 7 lakes throughout the National Heritage Corridor.

All of that data goes to state agencies, which put the data into context. That context may not always make it back to the average person living in The Last Green Valley. However, the volunteers have ways of spreading the word about what they have learned. "Doing the water monitoring, you're very aware of your environment and natural resources," Angotta said. "When I go out to do that river sampling I'm



Left: Kevin Kelley and Michelle Weiss use the Troll in Muddy Brook, Woodstock. Above: Diane Angotta identifies stream critters; and Jack Josti and Ken Parker monitor the French River. Below: Jean Pillo conducts RBV training; and trainees learn how to identify pollution-sensitive macroinvertebrates.



seeing what's out there and there are things you never give thought to until you realize how it might be affecting our waterways."

Angotta and Josti both said they feel a responsibility to share their knowledge and also take action beyond the testing. Josti said The French River Connection is a caretaker for the river and that means alerting officials to potential hazards and doing regular cleanups of any trash and debris. "If we see something we take care of it. We're not going to wait for a special day to do a cleanup, we deal with problems as they come up."

Pillo said whenever she is out with a group of volunteers she tries to show the connections. Those connections extend beyond the ecosystem within the waterway to the symbiotic nature of the land and the water. "We're not just taking note of the water bugs. If I see a freshwater sponge, I'll point that out and we will note what land animals and birds we see. I want the volunteers to understand the land affects the water and the water affects the life on the land as well. We talk about the whole picture."

Josti said he hopes over time the education effort of the water quality monitoring volunteers will grow even stronger. "We want to make people aware of what happens when you do things like wash your car in your driveway. The Last Green Valley does a good job of bringing all of us together so we can share information and learn from each other. That's something I would like to see continue, maybe even grow. And, I think it's always good to have an independent watchdog."

Lake Associations Troll for Good Water Quality

When it comes to lakes and ponds, the truth can always be gleaned from the Troll. The Troll can reveal whether the lake is too warm, too salty, too acidic, or warn you when the conditions are just right for an algae bloom. It can also let you know when it's simply perfect for afternoon swims.

With more than 80 lakes and ponds in the Last Green Valley, Trolls have become the regular companions of volunteers looking to monitor water quality. "It started a long time ago," said Ernie Benoit of the Webster Lake Association. Twelve years ago, to be exact. The Webster Lake Association had formed to prevent lake residents from incurring a dock tax, but soon started wondering about the water quality of its lake. After hiring an expensive consultant to study the lake, the association thought it might be able to keep tabs on the lake itself.

"We were using outdated high school equipment and not getting the same results," Benoit said. The Webster Lake Association rented a Troll and eventually began sharing the equipment with other organizations. As demand grew, the association decided to purchase its own.

To be clear, these Trolls are not the creatures of myths and fables, but rather devices that have proven invaluable to documenting the health of the lakes and ponds in the National Heritage Corridor. Jean Pillo, TLGV's volunteer water quality monitoring coordinator, trains volunteers to use an In-situ Troll 9500, a device that

has multiple probes to measure temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity and turbidity.

TLGV now has two Trolls that Pillo sends out for monitoring, but like the Webster Lake Association, others have decided the Trolls are needed more frequently and have purchased their own.

Ziggy Waraszkiewicz is an almost-one-man water quality monitoring team for Charlton. He monitors South Charlton Reservoir in 9 different locations monthly and also monitors 5 other lakes in town biannually. He also maps out the areas where milfoil is growing on South Charlton Reservoir.

Charlton was able to get its own equipment thanks to a Massachusetts program that funnels environmental fines to conservation organizations. Having a dedicated Troll allows Waraszkiewicz to monitor more lakes and ponds.

"I can do it when the time works for me now, so I can get to more places," Waraszkiewicz said.

Like many other volunteers with lakefront property, Waraszkiewicz is the first line of defense for the National Heritage Corridor's lakes and ponds. Pillo said lake associations have proven to be vital partners in water quality

monitoring. "They have an investment on the lake," Pillo said. "I think that helps."

Pat Monahan of the Amos Lake Association in Preston said her group is not only concerned with the lake, but the entire 940-acre watershed. "It's actually just 181 properties. The watershed is huge, and the potential for runoff is huge, but the number of individuals is not really very large."

All three volunteers said the biggest threat to the water bodies is invasive species. Amos Lake, Webster Lake, and South Charlton Reservoir are all holding their own when it comes to water quality, but it's only because of regular monitoring that the lake associations know that. But all three also believe the pressure on lakes and ponds is mounting. Runoff from roads directly into the lakes or into their feeder streams is a concern, as is the density of development around each of the lakes.

"In the 80s we all thought these lakes and ponds were going to stay pristine," Waraszkiewicz said. "But there are changes. There's a lot more development now than there was then." For Benoit the changes are even more pronounced. He has lived on Webster Lake all of his 77 years. "When I was a kid my best friend lived on the other side of the lake and we used to take boats and row





Far left: Ziggy Waraszkiewicz monitors a Charlton lake. Left: Volunteers from the Webster Lake Association monitor seasonally. Below left: Pat Monahan and Jean Pillo on the shores of Amos Lake. Below: The Webster Lake Association demonstrates its Troll; Pat Monahan samples Amos Lake; and volunteers use a viewing scope to measure the visibility of a submerged secchi disk as an indicator of water clarity.

over to each other's houses. There weren't many homes on the lake. In the '60s you could drink out of the lake. You wouldn't want to drink it now."

Webster and Amos Lakes both experience tremendous amounts of use from non-residents. Monahan said that as a trophy bass lake, Amos Lake hosts many fishing tournaments and the lake association members often volunteer to educate visitors about good practices to protect the lake, such as checking boats for any invasives that might be hanging on both before and after the boats are in the water. The Amos Lake Association also educates new homeowners with a welcome folder that discusses how to protect the water. The association tailors the information to each property.

The Webster Lake Association informs its residents by teaming up with TLGV and Lakeview Marine to offer educational paddles for Walktober and Spring Outdoors.

Waraszkiewicz said in Charlton, Conservation Agent Todd Girard joins the lake association's board of directors on an annual cruise of the lake to point out both good and bad management practices. "It's always about education and information," Waraszkiewicz



said. "In almost every case when [Girard] explains why a practice is not good for the lake, the homeowner is happy to take care of it." And by educating the lake association, the leadership is better able to respond to concerns, creating a constant cycle of education for better practices. That kind of diligence is necessary to protect the future of the lake.

Monahan said the Amos Lake Association has benefited greatly from its association with TLGV by being able to connect with other lake associations to learn best practices. "The partnerships are so important," Monahan said. "And, I'm sure our association with The Last Green Valley has given us some credibility and helped us with some grants."



TROUT in the BALANCE

The eastern brook trout's tenuous hold on its natural habitat in The Last Green Valley may be the single most important indicator of the delicate environmental balance being played out every day in the National Heritage Corridor.

The eastern brook trout is the only trout native to the region and, like the brown trout and the rainbow trout, its habitat requires clean, cold waters. "Brook trout are sort of the canary in the coal mine of cold streams," said Alicea Charamut, Council Chairman of Trout Unlimited's Connecticut Council. "Both temperature and water quality are critical to them."

For a variety of reasons, those cold streams the trout need to spawn are endangered. Perhaps no one understands the myriad of reasons better than Glenn Krevosky. By day Krevosky runs his business EBT Environmental Consultants, in Oxford, MA, a role that arms him with deep knowledge of wetlands and environmental factors, as well as state and federal regulations. In his spare time, Krevosky is on a mission to save cold water streams.

"My passion is the trout," Krevosky explains. "Protecting the cold water streams is the way to do it." It's been a trial and error learning process that stretches back to the 1970s. Krevosky said his first goal is locating historic cold water streams that flow throughout the year and getting them marked as such. Then he gets down to restoring the stream channel and cleaning up any negative environmental impacts.

Krevosky has learned the hard way that restoring a stream does not always mean it will stay viable. In

2014, Krevosky became the first person in Massachusetts to get a permit to stock eyed eastern brook trout eggs in a location he restored in Barber's Hollow Brook in Oxford. Pulling together a team of volunteers, Krevosky first restored the stream channel, pulling out tons of trash, and then tracked down the source of a fuel spill that was deteriorating water quality in the stream. Once the work was done he began the hatching program.

Then, the beavers moved in. In many parts of North America, beavers and trout have a wonderful symbiotic relationship, but not in Massachusetts. Krevosky said a beaver dam creates conditions that raise the water temperature too high for the trout.

Krevosky either pays for his projects out of his own pocket or utilizes grants or proceeds from a Massachusetts program that funnels environmental fines to fund conservation programs. Those funds are going to help Krevosky complete the restoration of an unnamed yet historic headwater trout pool in Charlton on the line with Oxford, which he refers to as the Dolge Court project. Krevosky first had to prove that the stream was perennial, meaning that it flows year round. Next, he had to track down the source of sediment contamination — catch basins which were not being properly maintained in a condominium development. Now that the stream has been identified and the source of contamination has been located, Krevosky believes he can restore the stream and make sure it stays viable.

With Dolge Court and another current project, Mill Brook in Webster, Krevosky believes he has identified two streams that are historic cold water streams with enough flow and grade to be unwelcoming to beavers once he clears the stream beds. Even if the beavers try, Krevosky is hopeful that nature will persuade them to move on.

Krevosky's work is groundbreaking because, for the most part, Connecticut and Massachusetts rely on stocked trout for their fisheries.

Douglas Beaulieu, manager of the Quinebaug Valley State Trout Hatchery, Connecticut's largest hatchery, said about 500,000 trout will be stocked in Connecticut's rivers and streams during the 2017 season from that one hatchery. "We've been stocking fish in Connecticut for more than 100 years," Beaulieu said. Rainbow trout, brown trout and other fish like pike are not natives to the region but were brought in for sport. No one expects them to create their own native populations in the state, but, "We do have holdovers from year to year, depending on conditions," Beaulieu said.

The Quinebaug Hatchery is essentially a farm for brook, brown and rainbow trout. Beaulieu said the process really runs on two-year cycles. The trout that hatched in October will be stocked in 2018 and 2019. The hatchery attempts to stock a variety of sized trout, including fingerlings.

Beaulieu and his staff gear up for stocking trout in February with the bulk of stocking happening in



“I WANT TO LEAVE SOMETHING GOOD BEHIND, AND IF WE CAN RESTORE THESE COLD STREAMS AND NOT JUST RESTORE THEM BUT MAKE THEM VIABLE AGAIN, THEN WE’VE DONE SOMETHING.”

*Glenn Krevosky,
EBT Environmental Consultants*

March in time for April’s opening day. The stocking locations are carefully chosen by biologists, such as Neal Hagstrom, a fisheries biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, with the help of volunteer coordinators. Everything from water levels to flow, temperature and quality is considered.

The Natchaug River is stocked with larger fish because it is capable of supporting them, Beaulieu said. According to Hagstrom, it’s a trophy trout stream because of its water quality. Charles McCaughtry of the Thames Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited said that besides the Natchaug River, the Fenton River and the Mount Hope River are both among the Corridor’s waterways that provide excellent fishing opportunities.

“Some of these streams you have to hike into and I suppose that’s why they’re still special,” McCaughtry said. “Every once in a while I can catch a native brookie.” But, McCaughtry does not fish for trout past July most summers. “The waters have warmed up to the point that no matter what you do, if you find a trout to catch you will kill it. The warm water disrupts their organs to the point they just can’t survive any stress.”

Charamut and McCaughtry said Trout Unlimited is hyperaware of the environmental concerns that create negative impacts on the fisheries. “As anglers we’re out there and we see the challenges.” McCaughtry said there is no question that rivers and streams of the National Heritage Corridor are better off today than they were several decades ago, but that does not mean they are safe from potential damage. “People don’t realize all the toxins that come off their brake lines, and where do we build roads? Right next to the rivers and streams. All it takes is one good rain and those toxins run right into the water.” McCaughtry said too many people do not understand how fragile the balance in the watershed is.

Jean Pillo, TLGV’s water quality monitoring coordinator, said urban and agricultural runoff are significant issues for the entire watershed, but Mother Nature also has had a role. The dry conditions of recent years have severely hindered a number of headwater stream monitoring projects. “The streams we’ve tested in the past just aren’t there,” Pillo said. Even after the streams start flowing again, it can take years for the fish to return to their spawning grounds.



Glenn Krevosky has been hard at work locating and cleaning up cold water streams in order to restore eastern brook trout habitat in Oxford, Charlton, and Webster.



Visitors enjoy self-guided tours of the Quinebaug Valley State Trout Hatchery.

Which is why work like Krevosky's is so important. If he can show success, the idea of stream restoration might just spread. For the eastern brook trout, that means having a chance to reclaim its natural habitat in The Last Green Valley.

For Krevosky, it also meant 8 straight weekends with a crew cleaning out Mill Brook in the coldest part of winter. The team took out mountains of trash, including a trampoline, and mud and sand that made their way into the brook because of human activity. Krevosky said his goal is not to just restore the stream to its historic state, but to bring it to a level where the brook trout can be successful.

Pillo said the only way that The Last Green Valley's waterways will continue to sustain themselves and the life that depends on them, is if more people become aware of the intricate web of the watershed. The trainings she hosts for TLGV volunteers mean anyone with an interest can learn how to become a water quality monitor, the first step in better understanding our rivers and streams.

Pillo said it's also critical for municipal governments to understand the potential impacts of development, sometimes on

waterways that might not appear to be close by. Stormwater runoff from streets can introduce contaminants like oil, metals, and bacteria to a stream, plus thermal pollution when rain water is warmed by contact with hot summer streets. Blocked culverts, or culverts that are perched too high above the streambed, can prevent trout from moving between stream segments in search of deeper, cooler pools. The loss of shade-producing trees and shrubs along stream banks can also raise water temperatures, and without leaf litter falling into streams each autumn, the base of the stream's food chain can be severely depleted.

The potential for negative impacts on the eastern brook trout are in many ways emblematic of the complexity of a watershed. "You have to understand all the factors," Krevosky said. "You learn from everything you do and you make mistakes but the next project is better for them."

"I won't live forever," he added. "I want to leave something good behind, and if we can restore these cold streams and not just restore them but make them viable again, then we've done something. And, I don't want to just do that for two or three streams. I want to keep going."

NEWS FLASH

TLGV and Partners Bring \$6.1 Million to the Region for Forest Conservation!

TLGV is proud to announce that it has successfully partnered with 19 organizations to bring \$6.1 million in new federal dollars to the region for healthy woods and forest land conservation.

Most of the funds will go directly to landowners for bird/wildlife habitat assessments and forest management plans, good forest conservation practices, and easements for permanent woodlands protection.

The funding was awarded by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service after a very competitive process, and underscores the importance of our southern New England forests to not only the region but the nation.

The incredible lineup of top-notch and dedicated partners includes: MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership/ Opacum Land Trust, Northern RI Conservation District, MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Providence Water, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Hull Forest Products, Thames River Basin Partnership, New England Forestry Foundation, Eastern CT Conservation District, Norcross Wildlife Foundation, RI Division of Forest Management, RI Woodland Partnership, Harvard Forest, Yale Sustaining Family Forests Institute, Audubon Connecticut, Mass Audubon, and of course the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Stay tuned for more information later this summer!

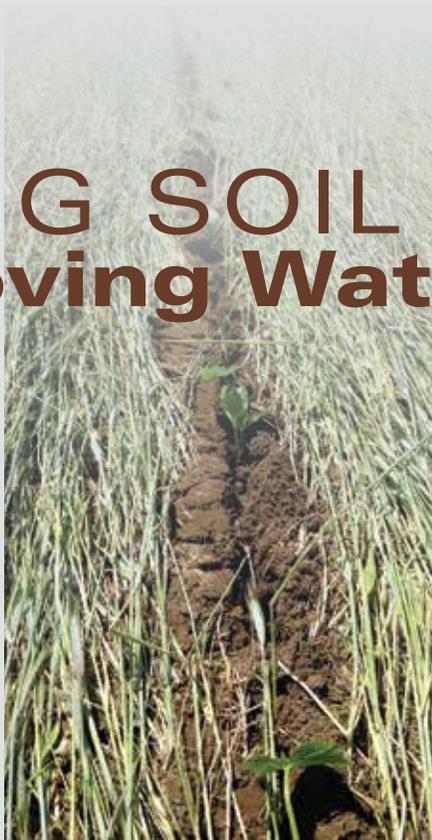
BUILDING SOIL HEALTH AND Improving Water Quality

The Last Green Valley is the lead partner on a project funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for farmers who want to save time, effort, and money while improving soil health and water quality. This project combines two of TLGV's missions at its core - supporting agriculture and improving water quality.

Farmers can improve soil health and save money by implementing conservation practices such as cover crops and no till farming. These practices can reduce erosion and runoff, reduce pest and weed problems, reduce fertilizer use and fuel consumption with fewer tractor passes, and mitigate drought with soils that hold more moisture.

TLGV, the Eastern CT Conservation District, and the AGvocate Program of the CT RC&D Council will provide technical assistance to farmers who wish to enroll. In the first full year of the project, 3 producers obtained funds from NRCS to implement conservation practices on 101 acres of cropland.

As part of this project, TLGV and its partners will also be looking at the edge-of-field runoff on select participating farms. That runoff will reveal important information about soil health and the potential impacts to the watershed. "This data could be very important for everyone who participates," said Jean Pillo, TLGV's volunteer water quality monitoring coordinator. "For example, if we find high levels of nitrogen in the runoff we know the fertilizer the farmer is applying



Top and middle: Woodstock Orchards uses precision planting equipment to plant vegetables directly through cover crops, eliminating the need for tilling. Bottom: NRCS's Ray Covino leads a soil health training session.

isn't getting into the soil. That's a waste of the farmer's resources."

While important to farmland, nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus can also trigger algal growth in waterbodies, creating undesired consequences to the delicately balanced ecosystem. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, agricultural nonpoint source pollution is the leading source of water quality impacts to rivers and streams nationwide, the third largest pollutant source for lakes, the second largest source for wetlands, and a major contributor to contamination in estuaries and ground water.

Farmers in the National Heritage Corridor already have been rethinking farming practices and in many ways returning to their roots. Some farms, such as Ekonk Hill Turkey Farm in Sterling, had already adopted soil conservation practices such as cover crops and no till farming long before the project launched. They are helping TLGV spread the word about the economic and environmental benefits of the program.

"It's part of our work to support local agriculture and improve water quality in our waterways," said Lois Bruinooge, executive director of TLGV. "With the help of farmers we can collect really important information and also help them conserve their resources. If we support agriculture we support conservation."

Exploring

OUR NATIONAL RECREATION WATER TRAILS

Bill Reid doesn't think of himself as an expert paddler, but he certainly has become the leader of a paddling movement. He bought his own kayak in 2007, and soon after hosted one of The Last Green Valley's first outdoor membership programs, a paddle on the Quinebaug River. "There were people there who knew more about paddling than ever will," said Reid.

On that first paddle, Reid found happy participants, willing volunteers and a reason to shine a light on one of the hidden gems of The Last Green Valley. Nine years later, the National Heritage Corridor earned National Recreation Water Trail designation for a third major stretch of waterway — 22 miles of the Shetucket River. The Last Green Valley now claims almost 90 miles of National Recreation Water Trail, including 45 miles of the Quinebaug River and 22 miles of the Willimantic River.

"Like so many of our projects at The Last Green Valley, it's our

partners and volunteers that make it happen," said Reid, who is TLGV's chief ranger. That first paddle sparked a nine-year movement, culminating with the National Recreation Trail designations.

Tom and Wendy Brennan have been along for paddling since the beginning. The Brennans attended that first paddle, and when Tom Brennan saw Reid setting up, he offered to help. Next thing Brennan knew, he was a volunteer for TLGV, joining Reid on many more paddles. "We weren't avid paddlers," Brennan said. "We used to kayak now and then, but the more and more we paddled with The Last Green Valley it was an influence on us. We saw what they were doing, and we wanted to be a part of it."

By 2009, Reid and TLGV had turned the idea of membership paddles into a massive effort to document the watershed. Source to Sea took more than a year of planning and put Reid's skills to the test. He

looked to expert paddlers in other conservation organizations to assist and lead sections of the paddles. Together the coalition organized events, many of which turned into mini-festivals with group paddles. "There were flotillas of people," Reid said. "We had a blast. We introduced a lot of people to paddling in the region. As a result of Source to Sea we were looked at as viable resource for information about paddling in the region."

Brennan, a member of TLGV and a business partner through his business, Village Electric, said he has joined about 75 miles of the paddles. The Brennans live on more than 60 acres in Killingly, and try to be good stewards to their land. The paddles, however, opened their eyes even more to environmental connections. "I think it was in Jewett City where we had to lower our kayaks down the face of a dam to get into the water," Brennan said. "It was great. I learned a lot about how the watershed flowed and how it all ties together."



A. DeBruin/sf



A. Dabrowski

Tying it all together for the rest of the region was the next important step. Source to Sea led directly to the effort to get National Recreation Water Trail designations and to produce TLGV's Paddle Guide, which was updated in 2016 to include the Shetucket designation and is now a comprehensive Paddle Guide for the Quinebaug, Willimantic, and Shetucket Rivers.

Reid also worked with the carpentry department at Harvard H. Ellis Technical High School to create information kiosks for canoe and kayak launches along the designated water trails. Brennan helped Reid install many of the panels. Each kiosk has information explaining the section of water trail that can be accessed from the launch area, and there are now 25 of them on the Quinebaug, Willimantic and Shetucket Rivers.

The Shetucket River National Recreation Water Trail designation in 2016, like the designations before it, was a team effort by many partners, including the Rivers and Trails Program of the National Park Service, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Windham, Sprague, Norwich, Norwich Public Utilities, Wheelabrator Technologies, Friends of the Shetucket River Valley, Willimantic Whitewater Partnership, Willimantic River Alliance, teachers and students from Harvard Ellis Technical High School and volunteers from TLGV's Water Trails Committee.

The Shetucket River was one of only three rivers to receive national designation in 2016.

"By designating these new National Trails, we recognize the efforts of local communities to provide outdoor recreational opportunities that can be enjoyed by everyone," said then-U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. "Our world-class network of national trails provides easily accessible places to enjoy exercise and connect with nature in both urban and rural areas while also boosting tourism and supporting economic opportunities in local communities across the country."

Neal Hagstrom, a fisheries biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, said the work to get people out on the waterways is critical to conservation. "From my perspective I want more people on the water," Hagstrom said. "I want them paddling. I want them fishing. I want them to use the resource because that's how they get invested in protecting it."

Charles McCaughtry, membership director of the Thames Valley

Chapter of Trout Unlimited and a resident of Ashford, agreed with Hagstrom. McCaughtry said he recalls putting his canoe into the Willimantic River in the 1970s when he first arrived in Connecticut. "The least offensive thing floating in the river alongside me was toilet paper and there was a lot of it," McCaughtry said. "Our rivers and streams are vastly improved."

McCaughtry has canoed the Shetucket River into the Thames River down to the Coast Guard Academy in New London dozens of times. He's canoed the Quinebaug River from Danielson all the way to the Academy equally as much, and over the decades he's led groups of Boy Scouts on both trips. "Those are great paddles," McCaughtry said. "You can see and experience a lot of wildlife and nature."

Brennan's appreciation for nature has grown by being outside. As a child growing up in Norwich, he was outdoors because of his involvement with the Boy Scouts. TLGV has helped him expand that love to the water. "They are such a great group of people," Brennan said. "I love the work they do. We [my wife and I] both try to be ambassadors for The Last Green Valley. I keep their brochures in my vehicle and I pass them out to people. I think it's so important to let people know what we have right here."

"Without somebody to watch over our waterways, who knows what would happen," Brennan added. "Every time I'm out on a paddle I'm amazed. You get on the river and in just a few minutes you can be out in the middle of nowhere on an amazing patch of water."

Left: Tom Brennan finds joy on the Quinebaug River National Recreation Water Trail. Top: Paddling the Shetucket River National Recreation Water Trail. Left: A new kiosk on the banks of the Shetucket River.



B. Reid



S. Swale

Access for All

The Last Green Valley's universal trail assessment team has hit its stride. Every member has a role and understands the goals. They have one mission — to figure out which trails in The Last Green Valley are accessible for people with mobility difficulties.

The person behind their efforts has a burning desire to return to the woods he's loved since childhood. "When I'm out in the forest, it makes me feel like, I don't know what the best word is — calmer, and more centered with myself," said Gabe Sipson, 26. "I feel like maybe I'm more of a naturalist and things align better, and it make sense. My perspectives are aligned better with what's really important."

For the last two and a half years, getting out into nature has been almost impossible for Sipson, who grew up in Woodstock climbing trees, exploring the woods and fishing. Sipson loved the outdoors so

much that he went to the University of Connecticut to study forestry. An accident on the job left him a paraplegic and his family looking for ways to help him get back to what he loves. About that time, TLGV Chief Ranger Bill Reid approached Sandra Swale, Sipson's mother, about some new equipment the organization had to assess canoe and kayak launches. Sandra and her husband Tom had paddled with TLGV on previous trips.

"I was so focused on Gabe's recovery that I took the equipment bag and it sat for a year," Swale said. "During the first year he wanted to get back into the woods. We didn't even know where to go. I remember going down to the beach with him and there was a ramp, but in a wheelchair it was so hard to navigate. We ended up turning around to come home. We realized there was no information for a disabled person."

When Swale realized the answer was sitting in a bag in her home, she snapped into action, contacting TLGV Office Coordinator LyAnn Graff for help with the next steps. Graff said all it took was an email to TLGV members and the Universal Trail Assessment Process — known as UTAP — had a team.

Swale, Graff, Greg Stillman of Brooklyn, Virge Lorents of Killingly and Angela Kneeland of East Putnam spent 2016 assessing canoe and kayak launches in the National Heritage Corridor, which was the initial intent of the grant-funded UTAP equipment. That data will soon be available online and will offer valuable insight to anyone armed with TLGV's Paddle Guide as to which launches are best suited for those with mobility concerns.

The team has also begun assessing hiking trails, such as the Air Line State Park Trail. TLGV Executive



Opposite page: Assessing the Riverside Park canoe and kayak launch in Brooklyn. Left: UTAP equipment and crew member Virge Lorents at work. Below: Recording data at the Riverside Park launch.

Access Refers to the ability of individuals to get into an environment
Accessibility Refers to the design parameters of the environment and whether the parameters provide access for people with disabilities. An environment may not be accessible to every individual.

Director Lois Bruinooge said a second grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection was awarded to TLGV in January and will fund more advanced UTAP equipment, which will increase the speed of assessment. "It's a slow process," Stillman said. "We're collecting a lot of measurements. The new equipment is automated."

The team spent spring, summer and fall collecting data on as many trails and boat launches as possible. They retreated indoors once the weather turned colder to input the data into a program that will create an information sheet for every assessed locale.

The information sheets will give detailed and objective assessments of the trail, its surroundings and access points. The trail might be suitable for a younger person with prosthesis but not suitable for an older person with a walker. "Not everyone with a prosthesis is going to be comfortable on the same trail, but with the information

sheets they'll be able to decide for themselves," Swale said.

Graff said the team learned that the look of trails and launches can be very deceiving when it comes to their accessibility. The Air Line Trail, for example, can provide a wonderful opportunity for someone with mobility concerns, including those in a wheelchair. However, getting onto the trail is not always so simple. "If you can get on it, there are long areas that are great," Graff said.

"But, there are gates to stop four-wheelers," Swale added. "Those also stop wheelchairs." The team is researching alternatives that can be recommended to trail managers. According to Swale, "There are gates that can let a wheelchair onto a trail, yet stop a four-wheeler. We're trying to find some grants and see if now that we have this data, we might be able to make some sites even more accessible."

Lorents said it's her hope to not only collect the information but make

sure it's disseminated to the people who need it most. Lorents is working on an event the UTAP team plans to host this year to get word out about the program and the trails that have been measured. The team could use more volunteers now that another set of equipment is coming.

Because of the work that has been done, Sipson will be able to get outdoors again this spring. He appreciates what his mom and others have done to help him and others. "I just want to be able to go somewhere outside where there aren't 1,000 other people," Sipson said. "I want go somewhere quiet. From what I hear, it's going to happen this year."



BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Lakeview Marine

Susan Duquette grew up on Webster Lake, she's raising her two children on the lake, and her business is on the lake. Everything Duquette does as the owner of Lakeview Marine is to ensure Webster Lake can be enjoyed for decades to come.

"I want to make sure the lake is sustainable for future generations," Duquette said. "I've seen a lot of changes in the last 30 years. There are a lot more houses. Practically everything is built up around the lake except the areas where there are wetlands. There's more traffic and more people. All of those things require us to take a closer look at the environment and make sure all the people factors don't negatively affect the lake too much."

Lakeview Marine sits on Thompson Road, not far from the state border with Connecticut in a spot that has been a marina since the 1950s. Duquette, whose maiden name is York, and her husband, Rory, started Lakeview Marine in 2010. They took over the business from her father, who had owned Action Marine for 19 years. From the start they have been active with the Webster Lake Association and in recent years they have joined with The Last Green Valley.

Duquette said her interest in TLGV started as a way to market the business and it soon became apparent that caring for the lake was a common goal.

Angela Brayton, showroom and office manager for Lakeview, has joined with TLGV to support several events. Lakeview Marine has hosted Walktober paddles on the lake for several years and will do a Spring Outdoors paddle this year.



Brayton said Lakeview really just facilitates the paddles and Webster Lake Association member Ernie Benoit leads them. "I can't match his knowledge of the lake and the history of the region," Brayton said. "But we enjoy doing them."

Brayton said by offering kayaks and paddle board rentals, she hopes Lakeview Marine is helping to increase the appreciation people have for their natural resource by getting more and more people to enjoy it.

Webster Lake's history is rich and varied. While commonly referred to as Webster Lake, the lake's real name is actually Chargoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg — or one of several other similarly long versions of the name. The lake is three ponds connected by channels. It is considered a "great pond" by Massachusetts, and it is the largest natural lake in the state, Connecticut or Rhode Island.

Brayton, who grew up in Webster and also lives on the lake, said preserving the lake makes common sense for the business. By supporting the Webster Lake Association in a variety of ways, such as hosting the association's ICE-OUT contest, Lakeview Marine can assist the association do its work protecting the lake. For the ICE-OUT contest, an Einstein



Left: Angela Brayton and Susan Duquette outside Lakeview Marine. Above: Angela Brayton welcomes customers to the showroom.

mannequin sits on a chair on the ice at Lakeview Marine's boat slips. Attached to the mannequin is a timing device that will trigger when Einstein falls through the ice. For a \$5 entry fee, you can predict Einstein's demise. Whoever comes closest to the exact month, date, hour and minute of Einstein's fall wins a cash prize. The rest of the proceeds benefit the Webster Lake Association and other local organizations.

On a busy day on the lake, everything from kayaks and paddle boards, to jet skis and pontoon boats can be seen. All are available at Lakeview Marine. "Hopefully if people are out on the lake enjoying it, they understand they should also take care of it," Brayton said.

2016 By the Numbers

in The Last Green Valley



18 Acorn Adventures, Mystery Meanders and Member Programs, with more than 500 people participating



1.86 MILLION People who visited National Heritage Corridor attractions or events



64,000 Walktober participants



20 Bald eagle sightings by 50 volunteers at 24 locations during the annual mid-winter bald eagle survey

89 Participants who attended TLGV's Historical Quarterly Collaboration Series



FIVE Historic preservation grants awarded

13

Award-winning photos chosen for the 2017 Explore The Last Green Valley Calendar



71

Streams and rivers monitored by volunteers



101

Acres of cropland with new conservation practices that will build healthy soils and reduce or eliminate agricultural runoff. Three farmers participated in the first year of this new partnership program

50 Community events attended by TLGV Rangers

20 TLGV presentations to community groups



7

Lakes and ponds monitored by volunteers

2,213

Students reached by TLGV's watershed and "Last Green Valley Grab Bag" educational programs



Floating workshop and 4 quarterly meetings hosted by the Thames River Basin Partnership

66,101

Pounds of trash collected by

1,559 volunteers

25,000

Copies of the 2016 Explore Guide that were quickly distributed

22 Miles of new National Recreation Trail on the Shetucket River

779 Tires removed by volunteers

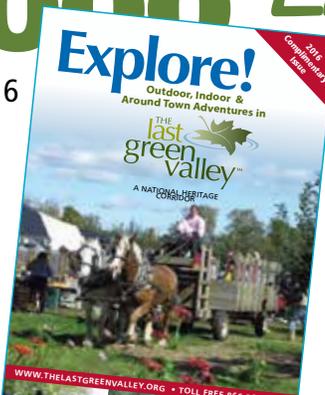
2



New canoe/kayak launches on the Willimantic and Quinebaug Rivers

\$308,110

Value of volunteer hours to TLGV sponsored or funded programs





Building Bridges by Cleaning Up

Reliance Health has used trash to build bridges. For 4 years, the Norwich-based community mental health center has organized monthly cleanups that build bridges to non-profits and community partners. Together, the small army of volunteers picked up almost 27,000 pounds of trash in 2016. Reliance Health does not make such a big dent in trash removal in one day, however. The organization holds monthly cleanups from April through September. In October, they celebrate their hard work.

Norwich is cleaner for it. But, the volunteers may have benefited more than the city. "It has helped many people in many different ways," said Suzee Costa, who facilitates Reliance Health's RISE Committee and volunteer efforts. "Everyone is working together and rolling up their sleeves for the same project. It's had a huge impact on people."

The idea of cleanups started four years ago with the RISE Committee, which connects Reliance Health clients to the spiritual community. Costa said helping the community is a mission that unites faith-based organizations and local non-profits. Picking up trash was the common denominator to get as many other organizations involved

as possible. The desire, from the start, was to build bridges between the organizations, their services and the people they serve.

Costa said soon after the committee had the idea for the cleanups, she learned about The Last Green Valley's program to fund cleanup efforts. TLGV has been running a cleanup program since 2012. In that time 6,493 people have picked up

196,534 lbs. of trash. In 2016, the biggest collection year ever in both weight and number of cleanups, 66,101 lbs. of debris were removed from the environment by 1,559 people in 35 cleanups lead by 19 different organizations. According to reports filed by participants, 167 cigarette lighters, 779 tires, 4,291 plastic bottles and 4,428 airline-sized alcohol containers were among the trash picked up in 2016.

While Reliance Health has been part of TLGV's efforts almost from the start, every year brings new groups to the cleanup program. In 2016 the Town of Brooklyn participated for the first time. "The grant paid for everything we needed to get going," said Melissa Bradley, executive assistant for the town and the organizer of the event. Bradley said Brooklyn plans to build on its first year haul of 1,020 lbs. of trash.

Costa is quick to point out that Reliance Health is not working alone. St. Vincent de Paul Place has become its largest partner and often has the most volunteers at cleanups. Often, when the group is out in a neighborhood, locals

will join the cleanup or share their thanks for the work being done. Norwich Public Works is also a major supporter of the effort. Costa said the volunteers pick up as much debris as they can, but sometimes they have to leave a pile for public works because it's simply too much for the group to transport.

The group moves around the city, hitting areas that have been suggested, but not focusing on one area. "We are very careful that we don't want to enable dumping," Costa said.

Sometimes they manage to unexpectedly grant a wish. A neighborhood association was struggling to cleanup an area in Taftville that had been used as a dumping ground until Reliance Health's army of volunteers showed

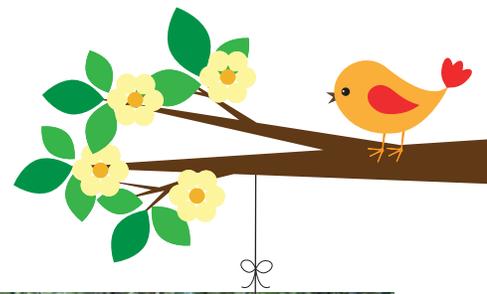
up to tackle the problem. "One of the ladies was so excited, she felt like her prayer had been answered, and she was right there with us cleaning up," Costa said. "No matter who you are this is something you can do to make your community a better place, and that's one of the things we try to do at Reliance Health is break down the stigmas and bring people together."

Volunteers from Reliance Health and St. Vincent de Paul Place work hard to cleanup Norwich. Photo credit J. Way, St. Vincent de Paul Place.



SPRING OUTDOORS

in The Last Green Valley



In its second year, The Last Green Valley's springtime walk program is growing. After a successful 2016 featuring walks and programs led by conservation organizations, the 2017 Spring Outdoors program will include any organization wishing to host a walk, much like Walktober does in the fall.

"Like everything we do it started because there was a need and a request," said Marcy Dawley, project coordinator for TLGV. "People were asking us 'why can't we do something like Walktober at other times of the year?'"

While it draws inspiration from Walktober, Spring Outdoors differs in some key ways. Spring Outdoors starts on the spring equinox March 20 and runs through to the summer solstice June 21. The length of the program means the same walk can be a very different experience at the start of Spring Outdoors and at the end. "What you see in March is going to be very different in May or June," Dawley said. "That really makes these walks unique in that way. You can go on the same walk more than once and have very different experiences. It's a pretty great way to get to know a particular area."

In 2016 TLGV made a conscious effort to only include programs hosted by land trusts and conservation commissions. "But we had other organizations asking if they could host walks," Dawley said. "This year it just made sense to open it up to more organizations." TLGV has developed an online brochure (www.thelastgreenvalley.org/explore-the-last-green-valley/spring-outdoors-2017) that allows Dawley to update the calendar with walks throughout the spring.

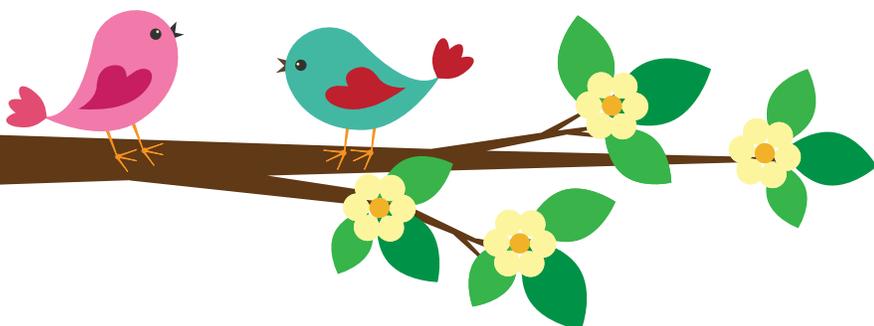
The 2016 Spring Outdoors featured 24 walks and was supported by 15 partners of the National Heritage Corridor. Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, northeast Connecticut's largest land conservation organization with 4,000 acres protected in 14 towns, held about half of those walks in celebration of its 50th Anniversary. "For a long time we've been a part of Walktober," said Mike Hveem, executive director of Joshua's Trust. "We think it's great to expand that into a new season." Hveem said in 2016 Joshua's Trust found that a number of participants attended every walk held by the organization, including repeats. "There is such a great variety yet it's the same property," Hveem



said. "It's all the more reason for The Last Green Valley to host these events in the spring and the fall."

Both Walktober and Spring Outdoors are a valuable opportunity for organizations such as Joshua's Trust, Hveem said, "The Last Green Valley has a vantage point of the region as a whole and beyond. We get focused on the 14 towns, but we are part of a large region. The Last Green Valley makes us raise our heads up and look beyond our immediate community and to see how we are connected to so many and how we could better work together."

By expanding the number of organizations offering walks, Spring Outdoors will have a greater variety of events in 2017. Some Walktober leaders have redesigned their walks to take advantage of the different season. Dawley said that even knowing the National Heritage Corridor as well as she does, she was able to find new walks thanks to Spring Outdoors. She already has her eye on several walks she plans to participate in for 2017, as "It's a good excuse to get outside and explore something new in The Last Green Valley."



Telling Stories THAT MATTER

History is being brought into the 21st Century thanks to grants from The Last Green Valley. TLGV awarded more than \$8,000 in grants in 2016 to five organizations. The projects use digital technology and other creative methods to market and interpret historic and cultural resources in the National Heritage Corridor. All grantees must contribute a one-to-one match to their projects. The following grants were awarded:

ONE

The Norwich Historical Society won a \$2,500 grant to complete the Norwich Freedom Trail and the Millionaires' Triangle, both key elements of Walk Norwich, a historic and cultural walking tour of Norwich. The project uses digital technology to bring the stories of Norwich's rich heritage and cultural sites to life by bringing awareness and appreciation of the community to visitors.

TWO

The Finnish American Heritage Society in Canterbury received a \$2,500 grant for the design and replacement of the Heritage Society sign and to add professional labels to the museum and archival items. The project gives the society greater visibility to the public.

THREE

The Killingly Historical and Genealogical Society received a \$1,950 grant to purchase a scanner and a VHS to DVD recorder for digitizing books and tapes to preserve the information they contain for future generations.

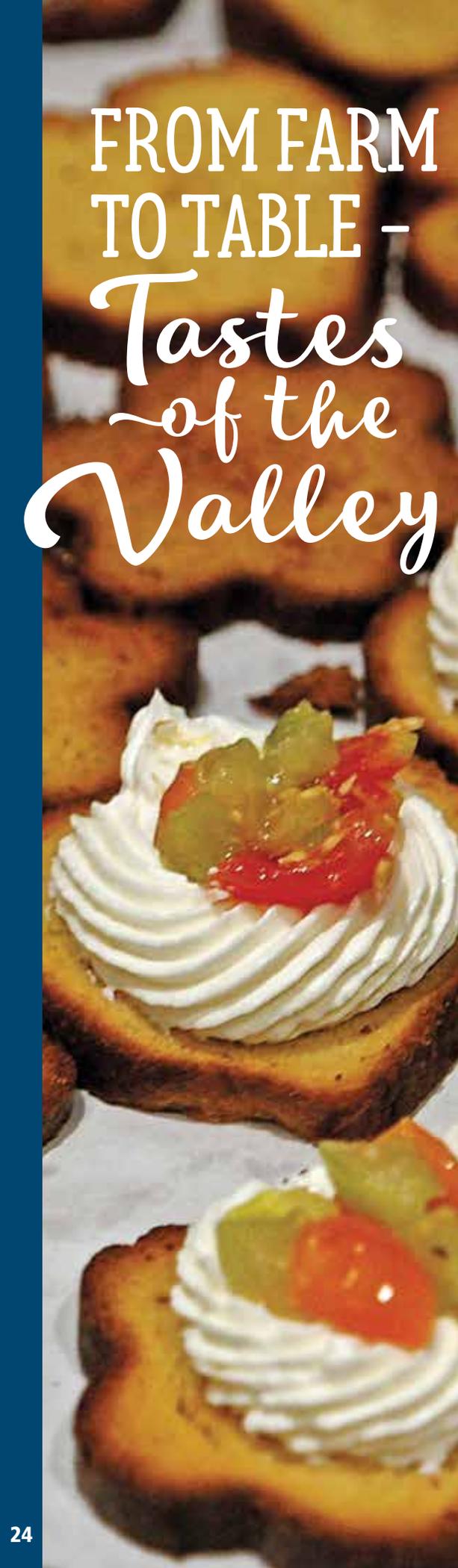
FOUR

The Town of Coventry received a \$956 grant to print and share a collection of historic photos given to the Town. As part of the project, the Town will work to identify some of the photos and create digital and hard copy books and poster boards.

FIVE

The Governor Samuel Huntington Trust in Scotland won a \$760 grant to create a period-correct sign to display outside of the Huntington Homestead. The sign will assist visitors by displaying the homestead's hours of operation.





FROM FARM TO TABLE - *Tastes of the Valley*

The Last Green Valley's 11th Annual Tastes of the Valley event on September 18 raised more than \$25,000 for TLGV programs and endowment funds. Event co-chairs Laura and Scott Moorehead, along with committee members Joan Gray and Ruth Hartunian-Alumbaugh, created an extraordinary evening of food, fun, and fundraising for The Last Green Valley.

Held at The Mansion at Bald Hill in Woodstock, the event celebrated locally-grown foods while raising funds for the National Heritage Corridor. Local restaurants prepared tasting portions using food and beverages grown and produced in The Last Green Valley.

For the fourth year in a row, participants voted Bella's Bistro from Putnam as the "Best Cuisine of the 2016 Tastes of the Valley" for its Rustic Italian Meatball made using products from 18th-Century Purity Farm, Bigelow Brook Farm, Chase Road Growers, Couet Farm & Fromagerie, Ekonk Hill Turkey Farm, Good Bug Gardens, Hart's Greenhouse & Florist, Lapsley Orchard, New Boston Beef, Taylor Brooke Winery, Turtle Ledge Farm and UConn Spring Valley Student Farm.

The "Best Beverage" competition was won by Ben's Beans of Putnam. Ben's Beans served Sumatra Dark Roast, Guatemala Light Roast, and Peru Decaf and used products from The Farmer's Cow.

New this year, Chefs Allen and Carolyn Granberg of Bella's Bistro were given the honor of choosing a "Chef's Choice" winner and picked 85 Main from Putnam for its Ginger Five-Spiced Beef with Steamed Buns, Bok Choy Slaw, and Apple & Currant Hoisin. 85 Main incorporated products

from Devon Point Farm, Lapsley Orchard and Maple Lane Farm.

Additional participants included: Baffoni's Poultry Farm/The Chicken Lady, Beltane Farm, Black Pond Brews, Blackmer Farm, Buell's Orchard, Cafemantic, Cloverleigh Farm, Creamery Brook Bison, Grill 37, Hosmer Mountain Soda, Marty's of Dudley, Mountain Dairy, Palazzi Orchard, Publick House Historic Inn, Roots Down, Sharpe Hill Vineyard, Simply Fresh Solutions, The Inn at Woodstock Hill, The Mansion at Bald Hill, These Guys Brewing Company, The Vanilla Bean Café, The Vienna Restaurant, Wayne's Organic Garden, We-Li-Kit Farm, Westford Hill Distillers, Willimantic Brewing Company, Woodstock Farms, and Woodstock Sustainable Farms.

We are grateful to Kathleen Thompson for donating her musical talents, and to Dorothy Drobney for capturing the event on film. The event was also a success because of the businesses who donated auction and raffle items, and because of the following sponsors:

Platinum Level: Fiberoptics Technology Inc., Rebecca Harvey, Savers Bank and UNFI Helping Hands.

Gold Level: Keith & Elaine Knowlton, Putnam Bank and Savings Institute.

Silver Level: Sara Dilorio, Southbridge Savings Bank and Titan Energy.

Bronze Level: CNB a division of bank ESB, Gerardi Insurance, Hull Forest Products, Jewett City Savings Bank, Village Electric and Weiss & Hale Financial.

Be sure to check out the back cover of this magazine for an exciting announcement about Tastes 2017!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Nancy Polydys

Nancy Polydys has traveled the world and visited every continent, but there is nowhere on Earth she would rather call home than The Last Green Valley. A Connecticut native and resident of Scotland, Connecticut for the last 18 years, Polydys said while she loves traveling, she loves coming home.

"This place really is The Last Green Valley," Polydys said. "I fly a lot and I've flown over this dark spot many times. You can really see how special it is when you're flying. You're flying over this massive amount of lights and there is this dark spot. It's impressive to see."

Polydys chose Scotland as the location to build her home because of her connection to the outdoors — a connection that began as a child in East Hartford, which was once a small town.

"There were woods in back of my house and a pond at the end of the street," Polydys recalls. "I spent most of my days playing in the woods, even in the winter. We would slide down the hill and over some brooks into the woods crashing every so often. I even made fishing poles, used string for the line and Christmas tree hooks for the hook. Did I ever catch anything? No. But, it was fun. We could only fish in the spring when the Connecticut River overflowed to the Hockanum, which flooded my wonderful play area."

After a career traveling all over the northeast and spending time in major cities, Polydys wanted to live with nature once again. She found a piece of property with the perfect hill and landscape to allow her to pursue one of her passions, bird watching. That love of nature which led Polydys to Scotland



also led her to the The Last Green Valley. "When you live in an area you should participate in what it has to offer," Polydys said.

When she moved to the National Heritage Corridor, Polydys looked around for local organizations and groups to get involved with and she became a member of TLGV. After retiring 10 years ago, Polydys decided to turn that membership into a volunteer effort and became a volunteer TLGV Ranger. Polydys said she began volunteering at every organization she had an interest in to see which would be the best fit for her. TLGV stuck and inspired Polydys to do more. Polydys has also decided TLGV and one other organization are important enough to her that she has named them benefactors in her will.

"I would like to see this area preserved," Polydys said. "I was rewriting my will and I decided I would make The Last Green Valley one of my beneficiaries. I know their federal funding won't continue. They do need some kind

of endowment and something to keep this region as it is."

Polydys did not make the decision lightly. She said after years of working with the organization she realized her donations are well spent. TLGV does a lot with a small staff, ensuring its funding is maximized. Every dollar is spent to further the mission of the organization, she said.

And, many of the programs that are run by TLGV actually multiply the donations by bringing visitors into the area that spend their money here. "People come from all over to visit this area because it's rural," Polydys said. "The Last Green Valley protects the area and also attracts people to the area." Programs such as Walktober have positive effects on the local economy, which is important to her. "I'm a localvore. There isn't anything I need that I can't buy locally and usually from a locally owned store, not one of those big chain stores. Everything we need is right here."

TOURS AND AWARDS ON A SUMMER EVENING

The Last Green Valley's Annual Meeting

The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) hosted its Annual Membership Meeting on June 15, 2016 at Allen Hill Farm in Brooklyn, Connecticut. More than 130 members enjoyed a gorgeous summer evening, starting in Allen Hill's restored red barn, then touring the farm by hay wagon and visiting the site of a Native American fish weir on the Quinebaug River with Emeritus State Archaeologist Nick Bellantoni.

Executive Director Lois Bruinooge and Board Chairman Bill Jobbagy also thanked all of TLGV's members, donors, partners, and volunteers for their support, and presented TLGV's annual awards. Alix McNitt from the Chamber of Central Mass South was recognized for her service on the TLGV Board from 2012-2016.

Roland Beland was recognized for his support of the water trails program, going above and beyond in supervising carpentry students from Harvard H. Ellis Technical High School during construction and installation of 16 information kiosks at public canoe and kayak launches on the Quinebaug, Willimantic and Shetucket Rivers.

Mike Nelson, Community Service Supervisor for Charter Communications, was presented with the "Voice of the Valley" award for providing innovative, outstanding, and in-depth coverage of issues that matter in The Last Green Valley, and for guiding or directing thousands of local programs.

The final award was the announcement of "Team Walktober 2016," bestowed upon Dianne Brown &

Regan Miner from Norwich, for their leadership in creating so much Walktober excitement in the City and for inspiring so many other communities to follow their lead.

Representatives from many of The Last Green Valley's communities were also on hand to receive new welcome plaques suitable for hanging outside their town halls, to let residents and visitors know that they are within a Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor Community.

The following Board members were re-elected to 3-year terms: Bill Jobbagy, Mike Nelson, Myra Ambrogi, Donna Baron and Mark Winne. The following TLGV members were newly-elected to the Board for 3-year terms: Debra Burns and Jimi Gothreau.



Town officials receive their new "Welcome to a Last Green Valley Community" plaques at the TLGV Annual Meeting.

B. Zoldak



DO YOU Walktober?

The Last Green Valley's signature event continues to grow as it approaches its 27th year. The 2016 Walktober featured more than 240 unique events, with more than 300 opportunities to participate, and drew more than 64,000 visitors to the National Heritage Corridor.

Here are some fun facts about Walktober 2016:

- The event has come a long way from its start in 1991, when Walking Weekend was born with 20 walks over Columbus Day Weekend, making it even older than the National Heritage Corridor. In fact, Walking Weekend began as a way to highlight the region while it was still working to get its federal heritage corridor designation. By 2007, the event had grown so large that it became Walktober.
- There were so many walks in 2016 that they no longer fit on TLGV's map in the Walktober brochure.
- Norwich has been the leader in walks for the last several years. The Norwich Community Development Corp. first began the idea of pooling resources around the City to make Norwich a destination place for Walktober. In 2016, Norwich hosted 34 unique Walktober events, with many of the walks occurring multiple times throughout the month.
- Walktober honored two people with the designation of Team Walktober 2016. Regan Miner, consultant with the Norwich Historical Society, and Historical Society Secretary Dianne Brown, were the first team to share the honor. Together the two women took the idea of using Walktober to create a destination and ran with it, creating a model that communities such as Southbridge, Putnam and Windham have borrowed to their advantage.
- Southbridge celebrated its community by hosting 31 unique experiences for Walktober. Walks included hikes around the town's reservoirs, an introduction to bees, an Octoberfest celebration and a walking tour through the National Historic District of downtown.
- Walktober 2016 was bigger than ever thanks to 140 partners and the inspiring volunteers who organized and led Walktober activities. Plans for Walktober 2017 are well underway.

The Last Green Valley, Inc.

Statement of Financial Position as of September 30, 2016
Audited Financial Statement

Assets

CURRENT ASSETS:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Cash | \$390,893 |
| Grants Receivable | 74,959 |
| Investments | 50,761 |
| Inventory | 1,291 |
| Prepaid Expenses | 3,528 |

Total Current Assets **\$521,432**

PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Machinery and Equipment | 25,842 |
| Less Accumulated Depreciation | (25,842) |

Net Property and Equipment 0

Total Assets **\$521,432**

Liabilities and Net Assets

CURRENT LIABILITIES:

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Accounts Payable | \$ 21,291 |
| Accrued Expenses | 28,018 |
| Grants Awarded | 18,666 |

Total Current Liabilities **67,975**

Total Liabilities **67,975**

Net Assets:

Unrestricted \$453,457

Total Net Assets **\$453,457**

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **\$521,432**

Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets

Revenues and Gains (FY 2016 Income Sources):

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| National Park Service | \$534,777 |
| Sales – Merchandise | 1,356 |
| Grants | 69,358 |
| Contributions | 9,580 |
| Memberships/Fees | 131,777 |
| Interest Income | 719 |
| Unrealized Investment Gain | 761 |
| Advertising Income | 15,120 |
| Fundraising Event | 27,605 |
| Total Revenue | 791,053 |

Expenses (FY 2016 Expense Allocations):

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Programming | 558,498 |
| Management & General | 76,551 |
| Fundraising | 34,810 |
| Total Expenses | 669,859 |

Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets **121,194**

Increase in Net Assets **121,194**

Net Assets – Beginning of Year **332,263**

Net Assets – End of Year **453,457**



Thank you to all of The Last Green Valley's Members, Donors, Sponsors and Partners

From 10/01/2015 - 12/31/2016

Federal Funding

National Park Service, National Heritage Areas Program
Federal Highways Administration, Recreational Trails Grants Program administered by the CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection
US Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Regional Conservation Partnership Program

GIFTS OF CASH

\$10,000+

Bill & Silvia Jobbagy *
Millennium Power Partners, L.P. *

\$5,000+

Mills Family Charitable Trust

\$1,000+

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\$250+

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Margaret Campanelli
Cedar Ledge Tree Farm
Ellen Chase
The Daniel Rust House
Marcy Dawley & Bob White
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Town of Hampton
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\$100+

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Goudreau's at Nash's Garden Center

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to our members.
Your loyal support
helps us connect
people to the places
and stories that
matter.

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**"THANK YOU"
 to our nonprofit
 partners. We are
 strongest when we
 work together to
 care for, enjoy, and
 pass on our historic,
 cultural, and natural
 treasures.**

* Has contributed to one of The Last Green Valley's endowment funds with either the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut or the Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

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D. Drobney