



LEEDS LETTER

LCA P.O. Box 114, Leeds, MA 01053 LeedsCivicAssoc@gmail.com LeedsCivic.org **MARCH - APRIL 2021**

UPCOMING 2021 EVENTS

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 7:00 p.m.

LCA MONTHLY MEETING

Location dependent on weather forecast; outdoors if clear, zoom if inclement. Contact Karyn: karynnelson@gmail.com for update.

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2-5:00 P.M.

BEAVER BROOK GREENWAY WORK DAY

Park at Haydenville Rd., Corrosion Control Facility parking lot. See article on flip side.

LEEDS VILLAGE-WIDE TAG SALE

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 8:00-NOON

Location: Your yard or driveway. Put up signs on your street. The LCA will advertise in the papers. Use Covid-19 safety precautions of 6 foot distancing.

TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 7:00 p.m.

LCA MONTHLY MEETING

Location dependent on weather forecast; outdoors if clear weather, zoom if inclement.

Wheeling Group Is an Important Partner in LCA's Annual Litter Pick-Up - by Heidi Stevens

You may occasionally notice a line of big-wheeled vehicles parked alongside Sylvester Road and wonder – What's up? The steep rock formations leading into the conservation area are the answer. If you hike in the area you know that many trails are a network of rocky hills and dips. If you are an off-road wheeling enthusiast you know this area is perfect for what you like to do. If you are a member of Don Willard's wheeling group you're an off-roader who understands the importance of responsible recreational land use.

Don's group has been partnering with the LCA litter clean up since 2007, cleaning Sylvester Road and the rocky trails they enjoy climbing on. Don Willard says, "His group considers it a responsible trade off for having the opportunity to use such a wonderful parcel of land. This is a piece of land that so many outdoor enthusiasts appreciate...mountain bikers and hikers love it just as much as us."

He has used this property for rock crawling for over 30 years and does trail rides about once a month. Two of his sons are now old enough to trail climb in their own vehicles and they, too, model responsible trail use among the younger riders.

Lots of local people use the property but Don has seen other enthusiasts from at least 7 different states enjoying the property as well. Wheeling groups try to schedule rides at Sylvester Road and other properties so that one trail doesn't experience tons of people on the same day.

Don Willard had a great relationship with Mary Clair Higgins. He once took the former mayor and Bruce Young, a member of the Conservations Commission, wheeling at his old Ryan Road property! The city officials recognized how important access to this area was to the wheeling community. Willard's group and the Conservation Commission spent a considerable amount of time making guidelines about what the off-roaders could do to limit the impact on the property. Some guidelines include avoiding trail braiding by staying within the 50' original power line right of way, avoiding the big mud hole at the top of the first hill, and removing all trash whether they brought it in or not. Willard thinks most off-roading enthusiasts love spending time outdoors and want to keep it as pristine as possible.

In 2010, a face book group, "Friends of Sylvester Road" was created to get the word out about responsible four wheeling, cleanups, and upcoming trail rides. It became a forum to share stories, photos and videos about things that happened on this specific trail. Willard says, "Many of us enjoy rock crawling so much because of the diversity all around. We have amazing ranges of driver ability, age, tire size, wheel base, etc....but we are all there to do the same thing. We challenge ourselves to see if we can get through a particular obstacle without any help. We feel comfortable doing so because if we do end up needing help, everyone is willing to lend a hand. It's

pretty fun to get through a tough spot that nobody has been able to make before you."

Willard has a great core group of people that have attended most cleanups, but every year he also gets new faces to participate and not all are rock crawlers. He's had mountain bike riders, hikers, parents, children, and even people that just stopped because they thought it was a good cause.

This year, Don Willard's group bagged and packed solid the bed of an 8 foot pick up with collected trash!

The LCA is very grateful to have the wheelers' ongoing support to keep the area looking pristine!

Top photos, left to right: Phil Andrikidis, Derek DeGrandpre, and Don Willard.

Bottom photo, left to right: Destinee Parkinson, Natalie, Jordan Steins, Chris Piekarski, Kegan, Tim Jaescke, Paul Roberts, Ron Benedict (back), Phil Andrikidis, Izzy, Raea, Heath Roberts, Megan Shiels-Willard, Eli Willard, Don Willard, Mason Willard, Alex Willard. (Elizabeth Willard & Justin Johnson not in the picture.)



Even Kegan is part of the action. See his remote control jeep!

More Leeds Volunteers Pitch In and Pick-Up

Unfortunately, winter litter doesn't melt with the snow and requires human help to remove it. On Saturday, April 24th the LCA held its 22nd annual litter pick-up. Volunteers picked up 44 large bags of trash with a total weight of approximately 800 lbs! That's a lot of garbage! Our gratitude goes out to the 36 volunteers who chose to spend that beautiful Saturday morning bending and reaching for trash left behind by others. Giving their time and energy to make Leeds' roadsides look better shows that the Leeds community cares and is willing to chip in when needed. We offer a hearty thank you to: Bruce Walker, Joanne Kelliher, Julie Akeret, Sam Daniel, Tricia Reidy, Jennifer Bryan, Rob Urbank, Janet Bridgman, John Coan, Bill and Kris Cobb, Carol Meunier, Jon Dietrich, Rondina family, Ruth Ever, Linda Butler, Hodgson family, Karen England, Paul Braden, Jason Johnson, Victoria Yoshen, Alan Verson, Penny Geis and others who helped out, including the truck haulers: Sue Carbin and David Rondina.

Easy Work, Beautiful Scenery

The Leeds Beaver Brook Greenway working group invites you to join them for a spring afternoon work day on Thursday, May 6, 2:00-5:00. The conservation area is located across from National Grid, on the east side of Haydenville Road. The greenway runs along Beaver Brook, has a wild-life blind, interpretive signage, and picnic tables. It's a wonderful place to spend an hour in any season, especially Spring. All ages are welcome to help pull garlic mustard, an invasive weed that needs to be removed before it reseeds. Come for any amount of time. Park in the corrosion control facility parking lot. Bring garden gloves and dress appropriately. For more information contact Jason Johnson at: 413-320-3386 or cookjohnson@comcast.net.

No Memorial Day Ceremony

Due to Covid-19 there will not be a public Leeds' Memorial Day Ceremony. A wreath laying will take place prior to Memorial Day. Everyone is invited to stop and honor our veterans at their convenience.

\$200 Raffle Winner! - by Heidi Stevens

Since the annual LCA pizza + raffle party was canceled due to Covid many people ate pizza at their homes on Pie Day, March 14. The brown bag raffle aspect of the party became a single \$200 prize to be awarded to one lucky LCA member. The moola was generously donated to the LCA by an anonymous member. All of the 2021 new and renewed membership names were entered into a random number calculator program. The image looked like a roulette wheel of names that spun in a blur until it slowed down and eventually stopped on the winner's name. If you haven't already visited the LCA website to see the lottery wheel, check it out at LeedsCivic.org. It was a fun and fair way to determine the winner.

The winner is someone who has lived in Leeds her whole life and was a past LCA board member involved in numerous events. She had let her membership lapse and just this year renewed it. Nice timing, Rusty Childs!

Rusty is now 80 years old and back in the late 80s and 90s was an LCA dynamo, helping to organize parties, parades, fund-raisers and other events. You name it and Rusty was ready to help on a project. She never missed a board meeting and did much of the legwork for events. Rusty had worked at the VA and was able to coordinate the Leeds' Veterans Day Parade. Back then there used to be a Leeds, Florence and Northampton parade! (The veterans put in quite a bit of the legwork!)

A couple of Rusty's favorite LCA events were the Spring fling fundraiser held at the Northampton country club where guests dressed up, and spent the evening dining and dancing. Another favorite event was the holiday sleigh ride. A friend from Hadley brought over work horses and filled the wagon with hay. People piled into the wagon with blankets and bumped up Audubon hill and back in the chilly winter air.

Rusty was also one of the original board members of the Bradford Memorial Scholarship Fund which continues to award scholarships to Northampton high school seniors who plan to continue their education. When the \$200 was delivered to Rusty's door, she was excited and grateful. She plans to spend some of it on spring flowers and yard clean-up. Congratulations Rusty!

Green Tip - Electric Vehicles - by Amy Stamm

Electric vehicles (EVs) reduce driving emissions by more than half, when compared to conventional vehicles. While a typical EV produces 4,815 pounds of CO₂-equivalent emissions annually, a gasoline-powered car produces 11,435. That means that in its lifetime, a conventional car will spew 66,000 more pounds of carbon pollution than an EV. EVs also save money, an average of \$750-\$1,200 a year in fuel costs. Over the lifetime of the vehicle, EV drivers use 6,100 fewer gallons of gasoline and save \$13,000 on fuel costs.

Now there's even more reason to purchase an electric car. The Massachusetts Energy Consumer Alliance has created a great incentive program to motivate people to purchase green vehicles when they need a new car. In addition to a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500 and a Massachusetts tax credit of up to \$2,500 (for a total of \$10,000) for electric or hybrid vehicles, the Mass. Energy Consumer Alliance has collaborated with select car dealers to offer additional discounts, in the range of \$2,500 to \$6,500, on electric and hybrid vehicles. That means that you can save up to \$16,500 on a new super-efficient car. Go to their website to see all the deals: <https://www.massenergy.org/drivegreen>, or sign up for one of their electric car test driving days, and then join the revolution!

Hotel Bridge News

The City Council has approved \$450,000 for FY2022 towards necessary repairs to reopen the Hotel Bridge for pedestrian and bike access. The LCA is grateful for the City's support, including that of DPW director, Donna LaScaleia and Mayor Narkewicz, of this project. More information and details will be forthcoming.

Pitch Pine - by Woody Rhodes

A unique full-grown tree fell across the Leeds Grove Avenue bike path entrance during one of our several wild wind storms in late March. It was a pitch pine, one of only a few we are aware of in Leeds.

Pitch Pines grow primarily on only two sites in Central New England—Montague Plains and Cape Cod where the soil is more sandy. Cape Cod's strong southwest summer winds particularly created the perfect environment for them. The pitch pine is the only conifer that can stump sprout after fires. The thick, course bark protects the trees during fires while the cones would pop open, assuring future seedlings. The seeds actually enjoying the dry, sandy ground.

Oddly enough the cones are also capable of opening in winter, casting seeds upon the snow for birds and red squirrels. That sort of explains why red squirrels were seen by the one that recently fell down.

Early colonists used the pitch pine for tar and turpentine. Later on and because the wood was durable whether wet or dry, it was used to make water wheels for the grist mills in Central New England. Even later it's hot burning properties were used to fire up steam engines.

After our fully mature Leeds tree fell we started looking around for others. While you'll find them here and there throughout New England, the one we noticed – as tall as they get and so obvious (but was it?) was at the lot of Rabbi Kevin and Ruth's house on Upland Road. Check it out.

Oh and by the way, low bush blueberries are often found to grow amidst pitch pine groves at Montague Plains. For many recent years free all-you could-pick wild blueberries could be had in the month of July – a real treat indeed.

