

**MIDDLESEX**



**LAND TRUST**

# *The* MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

Serving the towns of Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Cromwell, Portland and East Hampton

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The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.

Spring 2009

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## **MLT ANNUAL MEETING ON APRIL 25TH**

The 2009 Annual Meeting, will be held on Saturday, April 25 at 9:30 AM, on the Kruger Farm Preserve in Haddam Neck. At 10:00 AM, following the business meeting, The Middlesex Land Trust members and friends from the community will dedicate this new, 50 acre preserve. Please join us for either or both events.

The dedication is the culmination of years of effort from the MLT, Haddam Neck Spirit, State of Connecticut, Town of Haddam and local supporters who made this purchase possible. Immediately following the dedication, enjoy refreshments and then a guided hike through the property and adjacent conservation lands. The trail will cross field and forest and wind down to a small stream and continue into the Pine Brook valley. The Kruger Farm Preserve is an important addition to hundreds of acres of preserved land in the Salmon River and Pine Brook watersheds.

Directions: From Middletown/Portland, travel east on Rt. 66. At the first traffic light in East Hampton (Cobalt), turn right onto Rt. 151. At 3.4 miles, turn slight right onto Haddam Neck Rd. Just past the fire house and fair grounds, turn left onto Quarry Hill Rd. The preserve is just over a half mile down the road on the left.

*Think Globally – Act Locally*

## **TRUST RECEIVES SARRA FAMILY LAND.**

In March of this year the Land Trust received a generous donation of a 12-acre woodland surrounding Hales Brook in north Portland. Located at the northeast corner of Thompson Hill and Isinglass Hill Roads, the preserve will be named the Roy H. Collins Nature Preserve in honor of Roy and Jeff Sarra's grandfather who purchased the property in 1929.

There are several interesting features about the preserve. Native American depotage indicating a transitional campground has been found on the northern edge of the preserve by Nick Bellantoni, the state archeologist. Foundations dating back to the 1700's of the Hale and Booth families are near an old farm pond that Mr. Collins dug soon after buying the land. An old road which defines the western edge of the preserve at one time extended into South Glastonbury passing by old feldspar quarries dating from the late 1800's.

The two major tributaries which become Hales Brook cross our preserve to make their merry meeting just to the west. The northern tributary descends through a gorge just west of Belltown Hill and the southern tributary begins at Camp Bennett Pond between Belltown and Clark Hills. Camp Bennett is famous for being the first camp for black children in the nation. It ran for about 20 years in the 1930's and 1940's. A dedication of the preserve will be planned for later in the year.

The Middlesex Land Trust Inc. is a non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve open space in northern Middlesex County (Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Cromwell, Portland and East Hampton)

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## The Chairman's Corner

Dear MLT Members,

If you take a walk on the new Kruger Farm Preserve in Haddam Neck, starting at Quarry Hill Rd and crossing the hay field, you can continue into the woods at the back of the field on an old grassy road. When you hit the powerline break, you will undoubtedly have to skirt some puddles and rivulets, as you make your way across soft ground into the woods on the other side.

By angling to your left as you cross into the woods and heading down hill, you come across a small stream. Initially it lies wholly within the Kruger parcel, but eventually, it nearly follows the boundary with The Nature Conservancy's and the Town of Haddam's Johnson Preserve. As it captures the seeping water, it tumbles between large boulders and swirls through small pools. It runs very clear. It reminds me of a mountain stream you would find in New Hampshire or Vermont. Shortly after the stream plunges into the adjacent Johnson Preserve, it falls across a steep ledge as a beautiful little water fall and fairly soon thereafter, washes into the swift flowing Pine Brook.

The Pine's meandering is squeezed between the steep forests that rise above its banks. Following a woods road above the brook, the remains of an old mill sluice runs along the bank below you, until the riffles and pools give way to flat water and the land gives it one last squeeze before the waters spread out into Hop Swamp. Here on the edge of the Johnson Preserve, you can look out across a small fresh-water tidal marsh, tucked into the hills, a breath away from the Salmon River. If you launched a canoe here, you could paddle from the Salmon to the Connecticut River, and into Long Island Sound, which drives the barely perceptible tide at your feet.

It struck me the other day when I stood there watching mergansers and listening to a kingfisher, that the common thread of all of The Middlesex Land Trust's properties is water. And in a short distance, in this place, you can trace that thread with your feet, your eyes and your ears in an unbroken chain. We are not only preserving open space - land for wildlife and for your soul to stretch, we are preserving water. On all of our preserves, whenever the rain falls, what the land gives up, runs clear, clean and cold and helps support the life in brooks, rivers and our Sound

Please help to support our mission of preserving local open space.



Stuart

## THE PALMER BARN

When Prudence and TJ Palmer left the Land Trust virtually their entire estate in 2005, they included a big old barn filled with lots of old scrap wood. As grateful as we were for their generous gift, many viewed the barn with mixed feelings. Depending on your viewpoint, some saw it as a burden, while others, a blessing.

About a year after we received the property, we sold the Palmer house (actually another converted barn) to Bruce and Nancy Livensparger. Immediately they took an active interest in the land trust. Along with their daughter Erin and her husband Jeremy Stone, they saw the barn as having great potential. They envisioned it having life beyond storage, as possibly an activity center for the Trust where tag sales, meetings of all kinds, and assorted events could be held. But beyond the barn, they saw the potential of the small farm field directly behind the barn as a community garden, a way of connecting the land trust directly to the townspeople.

So, with those things in mind, the stewardship committee has been holding work parties to at least make the barn useable for storage and open the door for other possibilities. The barn has been cleared of the scrap wood, some of which has been stored for future use and some

of it burned. Any members who share our interest are welcome to join us. Leave a message at the land trust office (860) 343-7537

## SPRING STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

Please come to help out and learn more about our preserves!

Sunday, March 29th 1:00 pm - Palmer Preserve, Portland: Stain signboards and walk the 3-mile trail to perform routine maintenance. Bring loppers and saw. Meet at the Palmer barn on Middle Haddam Rd. Call John at 342-0658 for additional info.

Saturday, April 4th 9:00 am - Mica Ledges Preserve, Durham: Repair and stain the signboard. Hike the 3-mile trail and perform routine maintenance. Bring loppers and saws. Meet at the end of Creampot Road in Durham. For more info call John at 342-0658.

Saturday, May 16th, 1:00 pm - Pine Brook Falls Preserve, East Hampton: Blaze a new trail on this 40-acre preserve and perform routine maintenance on the rest of the trails. meet at the preserve entrance on Sexton Hill Rd. For additional info call John at 342-0658

## 2009 MIDDLESEX LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES – I would like to help protect open space in Northern Middlesex County in 2009!

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal       New Membership

- Individual Membership.....\$20
- Sustaining Membership .....\$35
- Patron Membership .....\$100
- Guarantor Membership.....\$250
- Benefactor Membership .....\$500
- Endower Membership.....\$750
- Life Membership.....\$1000+

I would like to:

- give an additional donation for: Land Acquisition \$\_\_\_\_\_ Land Stewardship \$\_\_\_\_\_
- donate appreciated stock
- learn more about donating land or conservation easements.
- donate time for stewardship, fundraising or office work: please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- give a gift membership: : Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **The Middlesex Land Trust** and mail to:  
deKoven House, 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT 06457

The Middlesex Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization so your dues and contributions are tax deductible  
*Don't forget your employer's matching gift form! Thank you for your support!*

## (REALLY FUN) WORK PARTIES

In the last 4 months trust members have put in 72 hours of work on various preserves. Here is a little summary to show what good fun we could all be having! This March we rebuilt the bridge over mighty Luva Brook using scrap wood from, you guessed it, the Palmer Barn and reinstalled the sign board that was knocked down by snow plows to a less vulnerable place. And, of course, we moved a lot of wood at the Palmer Barn in January and February. TJ, a typical guy, just couldn't throw anything away lest he find a use for it just after heaving it. We boundary marked our Rattlesnake Brook preserve. The eastern boundary borders an old quarry road which runs north into Meshomasic State forest and to an old foundation reputed to have belonged to Stephen Tom, one of the last Wangunk Indians in Portland.

We installed a one-mile loop trail at the Pine Brook Falls Preserve most recently highlighted in an article in the Hartford Courant by Peter Marteka for its incredible waterfall and leprechaun moss. We did a site walk and boundary marking of the 50-acre Kruger Preserve which we just purchased this past winter. Just off the preserve were the preserve abuts the The Nature Conservancy's Johnson/Elm camp Preserve is one of the nicest little cascades and waterfalls in the area. And lastly, we reopened the entrance to the 36-acre Harris Preserve. Other than the fact that ATVs have thoroughly 'trailed the preserve' prior to our receiving it, it is a wonderful grassy bird sanctuary with lots of little cedars and berry bushes. The old ATV trails actually make for a nice stroll on a warm spring afternoon. See, work parties can be fun so join us!

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