

# The MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

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

Volume 17, No. 1

The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.

Summer 2004

## Earth Day Annual Meeting Program Inspires Attendees

The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc. (MLT) Annual Meeting 2004 was a huge success this year thanks to innovative partnerships and an on-target educational program.

MLT teamed up with the Berlin Land Trust and the Connecticut College Arboretum to present an Earth Day educational program on April 22, 2004, free to the public through the support of a grant from The Rockfall Foundation.

The program, entitled *Linking Our Gardens, Our Watersheds, Our Open Space, Our Earth*, emphasized the interrelationships between our managed landscapes (private lawns and gardens) and the health and viability of our watercourses and open space preserves. The concept for this program was born from the *Smaller American Lawns Today* (SALT) initiative, founded by the late Dr. William A. Niering, Connecticut College botany and human ecology professor. Dr. Niering believed that homeowners could become part of the "salt of the earth" by being proactive in the transition to more ecologically sound home grounds.

Our two speakers gave excellent slide presentations on interrelated topics. Michael Nadeau, a certified arborist and Northeast Organic Farming Association accredited organic land care member, spoke about *Going Natural: Exploring the Links Between Our Gardens and the Earth*. He gave several inspiring examples of his company's work (Plantscapes, Inc. in Fairfield) converting lawns to beautiful, low maintenance and ecologically friendly garden and meadow landscapes.

Following Mr. Nadeau, Paul Woodworth, Watershed Projects Coordinator for the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District based in Middletown, gave an informative presentation entitled *Protecting Your Backyard Stream*. He spoke of the importance of maintaining natural streamside buffers to prevent erosion and maintain water quality and wildlife habitat (particularly in focus areas such as the Mattabeset River watershed).

Seventy-eight people attended our Annual Meeting/Earth Day program at the deKoven House Community Center in Middletown. Over 30% of those in attendance filled out an evaluation form, and all claimed they would recommend this helpful program to others. Attendance represented an impressive mix of garden club, town commission, land trust representatives and concerned citizens, many representing more than one sector, often the case with conservationists – they're an active, community-minded group.

We were excited about the positive feedback we received from attendees. As a result of this program, many stated on the evaluations that they will now . . .

- 🌱 *reduce the size of my lawn*
- 🌱 *plant more natural, non-invasive, native and wild plants, shrubs, and boulder patch gardens*
- 🌱 *maintain a natural buffer along a stream*
- 🌱 *let the moss be*
- 🌱 *become actively involved in local efforts*
- 🌱 *educate other members of my club*
- 🌱 *encourage my retirement community to go the SALT route*

That's the spirit! Thank you again to our partners for a successful, informative program. Thanks also to It's Only Natural Restaurant of Middletown for the generous donation of delicious "natural" refreshments.



Seventy-eight people attended the 2004 MLT Annual Meeting

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



## The Chairpersons' Corner

Dear MLT Members:

Both the calendar and the heat tell us summer is upon us. How quickly things can change here in southern New England! One week a sweater is too little, and the next a tee shirt is too much. With the hot weather come our perennial summer concerns over heatstroke, possible drought, dangerously high levels of ozone and other air contaminants, and potentially inadequate electrical supply. Last summer we learned just how vulnerable our electric supply truly is. Each year it seems these worries and concerns reappear, and yet fade into memory once the hottest months are past.

What often gets lost in this perennial cycle is the degree to which our own actions visit these yearly worries and concerns upon us. Our reluctance to conserve power, fuel and land has its consequences. Preserving land is one important antidote to these worries and concerns. Land maintained in its natural state as open space contains air rejuvenating plants and trees. Land kept green, and consequently not paved or built upon with man made impervious surfaces, has a cooling effect that can counteract the build-up of heat in more congested and developed areas. Trees and green spaces provide cooling shade for people, animals and watercourses. Preventing expansion of our road networks means less gas and diesel fuels – with their hydrocarbons and other noxious byproducts – will be consumed. And all this is before one even considers the aesthetic benefits of open space.

Preserving open space isn't just about protecting pockets of beauty, although it surely does that. It can and should be part of the mix of long-term solutions to these environmental challenges. Your continued support of the MLT and other land preservation organizations means you are contributing to the solution. Thank you for commitment. Together we'll keep this good work going, and the green space in our lives growing.

*Ralph and Diane*

### MLT Welcomes Three New Board Members

The Land Trust Board is pleased to announce the addition of three members. **John Forneris** of Portland retired recently from IBM where he was an engineer and manager, designing and fabricating semiconductor chips for IBM main-frame computers.

**Cathy Hull**, also from Portland, is an educator working with developmentally challenged people. She has taught young girls to love and respect nature through the Girl Scouts, serves as Secretary of the Connecticut AMC chapter, and is an avid hiker with the Meshomasic Hiking Club.

**John Shomsky** of Middlefield works in hazardous waste removal and remediation at Clean Harbors Environmental Services. He has been active with Meshomasic Hiking Club since its inception, and is also a member of AMC.

#### Board of Directors

Diane Moore, Durham  
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Ralph Urban, East Hampton  
*Co-Chair*

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John LeShane, Portland

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John Shomsky, Middlefield

Thomas Wells, East Hampton

Carlton Winslow, Middletown

Stuart Winquist, East Hampton

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Ralph Urban, Katherine Winslow, Stuart  
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1000 Members in 1000 Days Tally

As of early July, total membership stood at 315.  
If you know someone who might be interested in becoming a member, please ask them. *Thank you for keeping MLT strong!*

## The Palmer Legacy

Prudence and TJ Palmer were long time friends and supporters of The Middlesex Land Trust (MLT). In 1993, they donated two parcels: the Cobalt Landing parcel, our only preserve providing small boat access to the Connecticut River, and a six acre parcel on the Portland/East Hampton border called the Taylor Brook Preserve. Though adjacent to Great Hill Pond Brook, the Taylor Brook Preserve was named after Prudence's maiden name to honor her family. The Taylors were inextricably linked to the area as ship builders in Middle Haddam and as the builders of St. Clements in Portland. The MLT added one acre to the Taylor Brook Preserve in 1999 to provide direct access to the brook.

About four years ago Prudence invited several of us to her house to talk about additional parcels she wanted to give us in the future to preserve wildlife corridors that ran past her house and up the hill. In 2001, the Palmers donated some portions of the land Prudence had discussed with us. More recently, when the Palmers sold lots along Middle Haddam Road, they deeded us several acres behind those lots, along Route 66 and adjacent to the Taylor Brook Preserve, further expanding that preserve.

As we reported in our Winter 2004 issue of *The Middlesex Landscape*, we were saddened by the passing of Prudence and TJ in the past year. We miss their support and Prudence's infectious smile, which graced a few of our events and chance meetings on their preserves.

Prudence and TJ's past generosity had not fully prepared us for their final bequest, which includes the preservation of 70+ acres. In addition to protecting the remainder of the small wildlife corridors Prudence discussed with us on that warm summer day, this additional property links the corridors to the existing Taylor Brook Preserve and encompasses the 'field' that can be seen from Route 66 as you drive near St. Clements.

This is a very exciting gift for us. Prudence and TJ have left an incredible legacy that preserves an area rich in wildlife and history. Look for more information on this new preserve in the fall, when we expect to have a formal dedication.

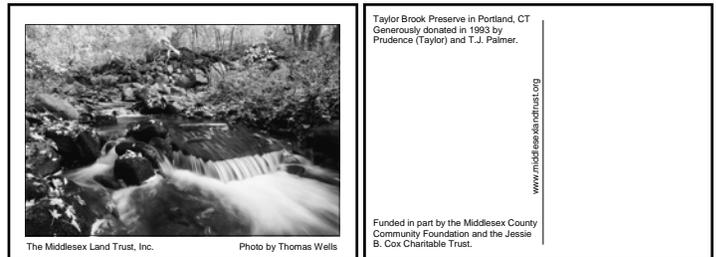


## Flagship Preserve Postcards Available

In the Winter 2004 issue of *The Middlesex Landscape*, we reported on a grant we received for our Flagship Preserves Project. Postcards are now available from MLT for our Taylor Brook Preserve in Portland, and more are on the way for our other flagship preserves. Postcards are sold in packages of six for \$5.00. Proceeds will be allocated to our land acquisition and stewardship programs. Many thanks to the Middlesex County Community Foundation for helping us promote our flagship preserves.

On National Trails Day, June 5, 2004, MLT board member and Meshomasic Hiking Club President, John LeShane led a hike at our Mica Ledges Preserve in Durham, one of our flagship preserves. Twenty-six people attended from northern Middlesex County and beyond, including Oxford, New Britain, Old Saybrook and Farmington. Several packages of postcards were sold, and we hope we recruited some new MLT supporters!

Postcards will be sold at MLT outings, such as hikes, canoe trips and work parties, or at meetings or educational programs. If you would like to purchase postcards, contact us at 343-7537 (*cash or check only*).



## Highland Pond Outing Enjoyed By All

Believing the weatherman's promise of clearing skies, 19 folks gathered for a walk and campfire at the Trust's 30-acre Highland Pond Preserve even as dark clouds lingered overhead and downpours continued. As a warm-up, the group struck out on the old trolley bed just north of our preserve. After 1/4 mile or so, the usable section petered out. Reversing direction, we returned to the road.

On Sawmill Road we entered the woods and followed a recently cut trail that took us along Sawmill Brook just below the waterfall and dam of the seven-acre pond. Above the dam, we took a well-worn path along the water's edge past curious mute swans and Canada geese that brought us back to the road. We connected with the trolley line again, another piece that took us into our preserve to the spot where Sawmill Brook enters the pond. The lack of a bridge and three

(continued on page 4)



## Upcoming MLT Outings

Join us for a hike! Please contact John LeShane for more information at 342-0658. Bad weather cancels.

### Lake Pocotopaug. Saturday, August 28, 5:00 PM.

Come for a 6 mile sunset walk around the lake and onto MLT's Pocotopaug Preserve. Pizza to follow. Meet at Main St. Pizza in downtown East Hampton. Children welcome, but no dogs; sneakers suitable. Bring snack and drink. RSVP by 8/27 to John LeShane.

### Guida Farm Conservation Area and Cassa Preserve.

**Friday, September 24, 5:00 PM.** Join MLT and the Meshomasic Hiking Club for a 4 mile hike around an old farm and woods at the City of Middletown's Guida Farm Conservation Area and MLT's adjacent Cassa Preserve. Pizza to follow. Meet at Portland Police Station or Guida Farm parking lot on Round Hill Road. Children and dogs welcome; sneakers suitable. Bring a beverage. RSVP by 9/23 to John LeShane.

### Digital Camera Needed

MLT is in need of a digital camera. Please contact us if you are interested in making a donation!



## Save These Work Party Dates...

- Saturday, September 4, 2004, 4-6 PM
- Sunday, September 26, 2004, 9AM-noon
- Saturday, October 23, 2004, 9AM-noon
- Saturday, November 6, 2004, 9AM-noon
- Sunday, November 21, 2004, 1-4 PM

Contact John LeShane, 342-0658, for details

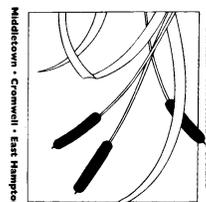
*(Highland Pond Outing - continued from page 3)*

foot deep water prevented us from continuing on to our boathouse, only 150 yards away on the other side. Eventually we completed the circuit via Atkins Street and Country Club Road and reentered our preserve on the trolley bed off Bell Street. A shady promenade greeted us and in 200 yards we reached our orange-roofed boathouse.

Across the pond, visible through the reedy growth, a mute swan sat on her nest as the sun set. We absorbed the tranquility of the lilled pond and enjoyed our campfire and camaraderie. Only once was the peace broken when we heard what sounded like a flat rock flung into the water. My assurance that it was the beaver slapping his tail did not convince a few until the big fellow swam calmly by moments later. As darkness fell the last of us departed. We left behind our first outing at this incredible preserve with the vow to return this winter for our first skating party!

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