

## 2019 HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER



**Dear Woodbridge Residents,**

As we enter the holiday season, I would like to extend the warmest wishes to you and your families for the upcoming year, and thank you for the support you have shown the Woodbridge Park Association over the past 12 months.

With your help, we hosted a number of successful events — including the fabulously attended Owl Fest in September, and our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in June at the Town Library. We endowed a scholarship for a high school senior and sponsored a Park Trail Run for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. I believe we exceeded our goal of becoming an even more significant component of our community's social fabric and succeeded in repaying your generosity.

Even with these accomplishments, our main focus remains the beautiful trail-laden sward at the center of town — Alice Newton Street Park. Envisioned 90 years ago when it was presented as a gift to the people of Woodbridge, it is an oasis of calm and site for spiritual refreshment.

As we move into 2020, we hope to increase our stewardship goals by adding acreage, improving the trails, expanding educational opportunities and continuing to provide year-round access to Woodbridge's own Central Park. I hope, during the holiday season, some of you will have a chance to visit the park and walk the trails. Happy holidays!

**WPA President, Jeff Gee**



# MEET A BOARD MEMBER: **KAREN HOFFMAN**

When the call went out for volunteers to assist in the planning for the WPA's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Karen, as one of our newest board members, stepped to the fore. Our anniversary event was structured in two parts (both are described elsewhere in this newsletter) and her infusion of focus and energy were instrumental in the success of both. However, she shone most brightly as the driving force behind the WPA Owl Fest, where her organizational skills and tireless promotion ensured the success of the event.

A Woodbridge resident for the past year and a half, Karen is a physician at Yale/ New Haven Hospital. With her husband, Paul, who is also a physician, they have two young children — James and Clara. It was through family walks in Alice Newton Street Park that she became enamored with its natural beauty, prompting her to become a candidate for the Park's Board of Directors.



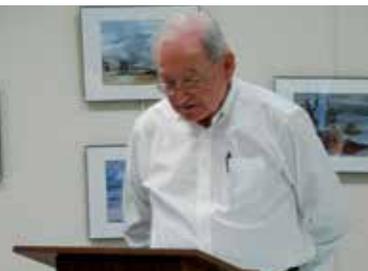
# 90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Even though the gift of the land by the Street family (which was given in memory of their mother, Alice Newton Street) occurred in 1928, the caretakers of the park were not officially incorporated until 1929, so the board chose to celebrate our anniversary this year. It was decided to first host a more traditional event, one with guest speakers, refreshments, and a light social atmosphere so townfolk could gather for the occasion. So in early June at the town Library our anniversary celebration was kicked off with the introduction of two political dignitaries: Selectman (and former State Senator) Joe Crisco and State Representative George Logan. It was an honor to be recognized by this august duo and their remarks added elements of both gravity and levity to the affair. The Park Association was presented with two lovely scroll proclamations recognizing the event.

The first presenter was Paul DeCoster of the Woodbridge Notable Tree Project. His informative talk was accompanied by a slide presentation showcasing the many “notable” trees in our town. His approach was relaxed and conversational but it belied a deep knowledge and love for the graceful giants that line our roads and grace our fields and meadows. Included in his presentation were trees known to many in the audience, as well as others of cultural and historical significance. Of special note is a Norway Spruce located in front of the First Church in the center of town — the tallest tree in Woodbridge at 121.5 feet.

Next up was Jim Dean, an arborist from North Haven and owner of White Oak Tree and Landscape. Last year, Jim was instrumental in our attempt to save some of the more majestic ash trees in the park. His talk briefly described the nature of the Emerald Ash Borer, culprit of the ash dieback, and his efforts to defeat them, using an injected insecticide to minimize any ill effects on other flora or fauna, especially pollinators. Jim then took questions from the audience regarding homeowner tree care and went on to detail specific methods to ensure prolonged tree health. One of his more salient points was his recommendation to leave a buffer between your trees and lawn — wood chips, mulch, etc., noting that trees do better in the absence of grass proximity.

While an event such as this occurs only every five or ten years, this was a departure from the norm for us, hopefully preparing the WPA for our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2029!





## **NEWTON ROAD PARK: NEW BRIDGES AND TRAIL!**

Running parallel to Newton Road, and nestled in between Amity Regional High School and Hampton Drive, Newton Road Park (NRP) is the lesser-known sibling of Alice Newton Street Memorial Park. Created from multiple parcels in the mid 1980s, the park comprises 20+ acres and encompasses a series of brooks that form the headwaters of the eastern branch of the Wepawaug River.

After some years of neglect, the NRP is receiving considerable attention, primarily through the intensive labors of WPA Board member and newly appointed treasurer Tim Austin. On a sunny Saturday morning in early November Tim and a group of 19 community volunteers cleared the trails of summer growth and fallen leaves.

Additionally, a new south loop was made walking-ready, opening up a new corner of the park and bringing the current trail length to approximately 1.5 miles. In the past this trail consisted of a simple out-and-back design; now, with this new section, a more extensive walk can be enjoyed.

Local Boy Scouts are playing a major role in the improvements to NRP. This type of community involvement and giving back goes a long way toward expanding the recreational opportunities in Woodbridge. Recently Eagle Scout candidate A.J. Pocwierz and his team completed two boardwalk spans across the east branch of the Wepawaug River, joining the north and south sides of the white trail.

If your Boy Scout, Girl Scout, or other service organization family member is in need of a service project, or you would like to individually help us further develop this community resource, please email [president@woodbridgepark.org](mailto:president@woodbridgepark.org).

Trailhead and other information about Newton Road Park can be found at our website, [woodbridgepark.org/maps](http://woodbridgepark.org/maps).

# COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

This year, the WPA Board voted to endow a \$500 scholarship to be given to a graduating Amity High School senior who had shown an interest in conservation, environmental science, and the green world of our park, just across Newton Road and contiguous to the Newton Road Park.

The recipient was Talia Barry of Orange, who is currently a freshman at the University of Tampa. She was chosen by a school committee from the many seniors who submitted an application. This program is something we hope can be expanded in scope — by recognizing more than one deserving senior each year, or by providing a larger stipend.

# ASH UPDATE

Recently, our Park manager, Nate Case, found it necessary to have a number of dead ash trees taken down — 12 in all. These trees, along with a few problematic others, were overhanging some of the trails closest to the main entrance. This is an ongoing effort that reflects our commitment to monitor the Emerald Ash Borer traps, maintain the injected trees, and stay current with the latest science. All of these tasks are essential to keeping the park safe and accessible to all.

# SECOND ANNUAL TRAIL RUN

This year's edition of the Alice Newton Street Park Trail Run saw a 20% increase in participants on the brisk Sunday morning of November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The 49 runners and walkers turned back their clocks (it was the end of daylight savings) and braved the difficult 2-loop trail in the 4-mile event won overall by Andrew Jarombeck of Greenwich in 26:35, a new record. First female was Brenda McLean of Sandy Hook in 39:11. First Woodbridge finishers were Jeff Townsend (2<sup>nd</sup> overall) and Kathy Jackson. Timing was provided by Paynes Corner Timing and full results may be accessed on their website, [pctiming.com](http://pctiming.com). Again this year, the course design by Jeff Kravetz and trail grooming by Nate Case ensured the event's success.





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## OWLS! OWLS! OWLS!

This past September, in an effort to spotlight our 90th anniversary with a community event, the Woodbridge Park Association hosted its first-ever Owl Fest. Over 300 folks interested in the vagaries of our raptor friends gathered at the gym of the Center School to see and hear this presentation. The barn owl, pictured at left, was one of the showstoppers at the Fest.



The program consisted of 2 members of a group from Killingworth, A Place Called Hope, who introduced the audience to 4 owls, explaining the owls' needs and behaviors, showing them around the room, and answering questions the audience put forth.

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