



20 YEARS

# Hedgerows

Summer 2011 Published by the Washington Township Land Trust

Support Local Land Conservation



## Mill Pond Park

by Chris Steffan

Joan O'Dowd donated approximately 8 acres of property to the newly formed Washington Township Land Trust. This property (behind the mill) had originally been the mill pond. A dam breach caused the pond to drain leaving behind a wet land area WTLT chose to make into a passive park.

Mill Pond Trail started with Jim O'Brien who mowed a path from his auto body shop down to the mill so that he and his wife could take evening strolls. Using that as a starting point, the trail was expanded to create a loop that allowed a view of the back of the mill. No public access point was available at this time. A more recent trail addition is the Ghost Walk, a creation by Keith Hayes.

In 1993 Michael Haynes built a bridge as his Eagle Scout Award Project. The bridge connected two sides of the property separated by a small tributary running into the South Branch. It floated out of position due to flooding of the South Branch of the Raritan. WTLT reached out to John Seals who brought in a large machine and repositioned the bridge. Unfortunately, the bridge floated again and remained out of position until 2010.

Near the tributary is the Helen Andrews Daffodil Garden surrounding a Swamp White Oak Tree. WTLT cleared and planted this area in 1996 to honor Helen and Stan Andrews who gave immeasurable support to the organization. A wonderful corner stone, donated by Bill Harrington, marks the garden; the attached brass plaque came

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WTLT President Keith Hayes (standing) and David R. Peifer, Executive Director, URWA.

Under his leadership the Land Trust preserved over 1,000 acres in Washington Township. Keith partnered with such groups as Green Acres, NJWSA, Morris County, Washington Township and statewide groups such as the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

Keith's favorite acquisition had to be the preservation of 75 acres owned by Jason Lance. This was a 10 year long project, with lots of ups and downs, starts and stops. Keith persevered. The final result is the preservation of the beautiful view of the Schooley's Mountain ridge as you drive south out of town.

Just last fall, Keith led the way to preserve the 200 acre Borgenicht tract.

Besides land, Keith loved the plants, animals and bugs that inhabited it. Every newsletter had an article about local native plants such as the Paw Paw tree, American Chestnuts, Bitter Orange and Persimmon trees.

"GO NATIVE" was the inspiration of Keith, an opportunity for the community to sponsor a re-vegetation of native plants in our park.

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Keith working on the Land Trust mill in 1996.

*Tireless, talented, creative, great sense of humor, caring friend to all –*

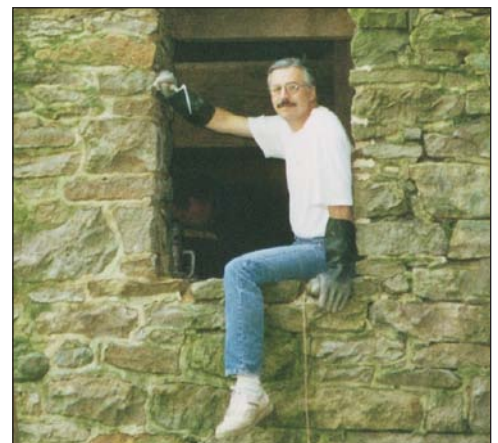
by Karen Richards

You all know who I am describing. These are the words you will hear over and over as we all speak. But my role today is to remind us all of Keith's amazing contribution to our community.

When Jim approached the Land Trust about this event and needed someone to speak of Keith's community work, I jumped at the chance. Like most people, I do not like speaking in public but I felt it would be an honor to speak about Keith. I was willing to put aside my fears for the opportunity to honor Keith.

Keith was a preservationist. He loved preserving the environment, its land, plants, animals, and buildings.

Keith joined the Land Trust in 1997. Shortly after joining he became secretary, and then served as the President from 2002 until 2011. I had the privilege of serving as his vice president since 2003.



**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Washington Township Land Trust was organized to protect and preserve the ecological, cultural, and historical integrity of the areas that contribute to and enhance the rural character of Washington Township and its environs. The Trust also promotes public interest in conserving land for open space uses in harmony with the natural environment and acquires interests in land by purchase or donation. It also manages land and property easements for the benefit of the public and educates the public to be stewards of the land.

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Color versions of the newsletter can be found on [www.wtlt.org](http://www.wtlt.org)

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**Katie Dickson's Gold Award Project**

by Caryl Brackenridge

On Sunday, May 15, 2011, the Washington Township Land Trust celebrated Katie Dickson's Gold Award project by unveiling a new trail map and information kiosk sign. The kiosk sign is located along the Columbia Trail where it crosses the Land Trust's wildflower meadow on Fairview Avenue in Long Valley.



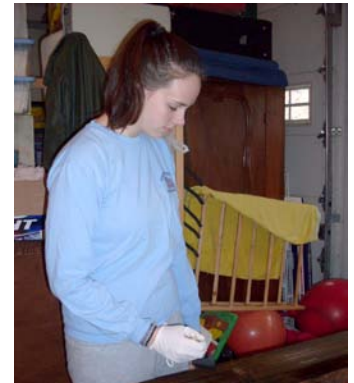
WTLT Mill Pond Park Kiosk.

Karen Richards, Vice-President of the Land Trust, praised Katie's dedication to her community, her leadership abilities and her time-management skills. Katie spent 84 hours on the project, designing and printing a trail map of Mill Pond Park, and designing and helping build the kiosk sign to house the trail map and other Land Trust information. To develop the map, she walked the trails with a hand-held GPS, marking points of interest as well as the direction of the paths, and then transferred those points to a map of the property.

As an all-volunteer non-profit organization, the Washington Township Land Trust owns and manages approximately 200 acres of park land and has helped preserve over 1,000 acres of open space.



Katie Dickson



Erin Kern helped Katie with the project.



Katie applying finish to the framing.



Information contained in the WTLT Mill Pond Park Kiosk.

## *Tireless, talented, creative, great sense of humor, caring friend to all –*

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And then there were the bugs. One might say it was his life's work. He informed our readers about stink bugs, lady bugs, and long horned beetles.

This mill and its preservation is what brought Keith to the Land Trust. He started here as a volunteer working on the stone foundation. His creativity and enthusiasm inspired us all, and we quickly recruited him to our Board.

Keith also served on the Washington Township Historic Preservation Commission from 2002-2011. His love for historic buildings and his classes in architecture led him to become a member.

Keith was passionate about preserving history and willing to spend hours on site visits, reports and meetings. His most valuable contribution was his ability to look at an applicant's plans and find ways to make the project adhere to preservation guidelines while still meeting the applicants' needs. His contributions often helped promote



an ADVISORY relationship, rather than an ADVERSARIAL one.

Keith was extremely dedicated to Washington Township. He worked long evenings and almost every weekend, preserving the land, plants and buildings of Washington Township. We are so lucky that he settled in our town, even though his stay was too short.

I would like to conclude with a personal story that will hopefully make you smile.

I met Keith through my involvement with the land trust. Our monthly meetings were held here in this mill, in the downstairs "office" at 8 pm. I would rush home from work, throw on some sweats, and head out to the meeting. Sitting in the basement, my nose would be running from a mold allergy. My eyes would be half shut – part due to the allergy, part due to the never ending discussion of the preservation of the mill. The main goal back then was to keep this building from falling into the river. Then we had a fundraiser in the Brew Pub in honor of Don Palmer. I was not in my usual sweats, but in a dress with hair and make-up—all done up for the special occasion.

Keith came over, with Jim not far behind, and exclaimed, "WOW. You clean up nicely. I did not recognize you without your glowing red nose and you are wearing real clothes." I didn't really know Keith at the time, you can imagine my surprise. I can still picture Jim's expression – Oh God, here he goes again. I stammered something about being allergic to mold and quickly finished my drink. Knowing Keith as I do now, I understand his well intentioned message.

Why wouldn't you always want to look your best?

I often think of Keith, as I head out – just to run to the store or run out to that meeting in my sweats. I stop and think, why not put my best self forward? Why not treat every day as a special occasion?

Thank you, Keith.



## **A Birder's View of Mill Pond Park**

by Alison Goessling

In early May I visited Mill Pond Park with Chris Steffan, our Treasurer. Our goal was to review the status of the trails, but for me, it was the middle of Spring Migration, and any bird might be seen. We parked and I got out of the car, binoculars in hand, gazing at the Vultures circling above Mill Pond Park.

"*Turkey Vultures?*" asked Chris, wondering why I even bothered to look at such a common sight. "*Yes, both Black & Turkey Vultures.*" I handed her the binoculars. "*Black Vultures have the shorter tails and the white at the end of the wings.*" I explained. Chris is familiar with my birding obsession and is wonderfully patient with me.

"*What's that – a Red Tail Hawk?*" She pointed at a different silhouette gliding overhead. "*No – Cooper's Hawk.*" I gazed at the other birds floating above. "*There – that's a Red-Tail Hawk.*" From a birding standpoint we had seen four different raptors before leaving the parking lot. Excellent start!

We continued along the edge of the wood, Chris explaining that the pond ahead was really only a retention basin filled with water. "*We had so much rain this year the basin hasn't emptied. Normally the trail goes right across the middle, but we'll have to go around.*" She smiled and added, "*It's full of frogs.*"

We made our way along the spruce trees to the edge of the basin and I stopped and pointed. An unusual duck, a Hooded Merganser, was nervously paddling away with his white crest, outlined in black, fanned up in alarm from seeing us. Beyond him was two, no three, Little Green Herons searching for frogs.

"*How can you tell it's a Green Heron?*" asked Chris. I grinned. "*Uh, well, by it's orange legs and chestnut neck, actually. I don't know why they call it Green.*"

We continued into the woods along the various paths, reviewing the status of the trails. I was continually distracted as I heard and saw more birds. There were Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Blue Gray Gnatcatchers, Carolina Wrens, Catbirds, Song Sparrows, Downy Woodpeckers and more. With the diversity of even the modest size space of Mill Pond Park, the amount of birds singing and chattering was delightful.

I realized Chris was looking at me waiting for an answer to something she must have said. "*Well? It's Spring Migration.*" I said. "*You can't expect a conversation out of me until we're indoors.*" We laughed and continued on our way.

As we were leaving, we crept slowly past the basin, watching the duck and herons. To our surprise, a fox trotted out, busily searching for mice along the bank. We froze, and Chris stealthily reached for her camera. The wind was in our favor, and she got a few pictures before the wind shifted and alerted the fuzzy fellow to our presence. As he ran off we mused about how much life and activity was happening in Mill Pond Park. It's a very special place.



Fox photo taken by Chris Steffan at Mill Pond Park.

# Mill Pond Park

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from Academy Awards. Daffodils were donated by members; mowing, digging & planting was done by Stan, Keith Cronshey, Caryl Brackeenridge, Chris Steffan, Sarita Ritt, Alice Selander, Liz Chudoba and a Brownie troop led by Leona Harrington and Tami Janiszewski. Frying Pan Tree Trail is the route to this garden.

In 2007, Welsh Farms property on Fairview Ave was sold for development. Mr. Ray Rice and Toll Bros. put 15+ acres of land into preservation by deeding it over to the Land Trust, including the Welsh Farms tree farm and the small corner lot on Fairview Ave. next to Long Valley Auto Body. Columbia Trail crosses Fairview Ave. at this point. An easement for Columbia Trail gave the Land Trust the public access point needed to open the park to the public.

President Keith Hayes developed the idea of a native tree adoption program. In 2009, the first native tree, a Pawpaw, was planted along Frying Pan Tree Trail to start our Native Tree Program. Brian Dickson's Eagle Scout project to widen and mark Frying Pan Tree Trail was completed that August.

As part of his project, he also identified and marked special trees along the trail.

Meanwhile, Welsh Farms Christmas tree farm had become overgrown with wild multi-flora rose bushes. They were growing in the evergreens as well as taking over the ground to the point that the area was impassable. A volunteer, J. Battista, came to our rescue. He donated his time and equipment to cut through the rose jungle. He also moved the Eagle Scout bridge to a location not so prone to flooding. We planted a native tree 'nursery' in part of the tree farm meadow in 2011.



In the spring of 2010, we decided to make a wild flower garden in the corner property on Fairview Avenue. The ground was over-seeded and we had our start. Girl Scout Troop #94067 planted a native bayberry bush in the meadow as part of a badge requirement. May, 2011, Katie Dickson finished her Gold Award project in which she created a trail map and built a kiosk sign. The sign was placed in the meadow near Columbia Trail. Girl Scout Troop #94092 will be planting a white dogwood tree in the wildflower meadow in June, 2011.

Mill Pond Park had humble beginnings in 1991 but has grown and evolved, thanks to many hours of volunteer labor by a number of individuals and groups to whom the Land Trust owes a debt of gratitude.

## Washington Township Land Trust Annual Membership



Individual \$25     Family \$35     Business \$100

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I wish to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for  Land preservation     Mill restoration work

Make check payable to: WTLT  
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*Volunteers and Professional  
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