

Legacy *Matters*



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F O R G O O D F O R E V E R F O R T H E V A L L E Y



The Naugatuck River Greenway links Ansonia, Derby and Shelton, for miles of scenic walking or biking.



The great outdoors is a natural classroom for young students at the Redwing Pond House preschool.



Built on the grounds of the Ansonia Nature Center, the nature-based preschool was founded by volunteers with the Friends of the Ansonia Nature Center.



Kayaking, water-skiing and fishing are some of the preferred activities on Lake Zoar, which is bordered by Monroe, Newtown, Oxford and Southbury.

When people come together to conserve forests, fields, streams, lakes, and other open spaces that are important to the community, they are doing more than protecting the scenery. They are improving the quality of life for our citizens, and are helping to preserve plant, animal and community ecosystems that would otherwise disappear. The Valley is filled with numerous conservation areas that provide opportunities for recreation.

Seymour and Oxford Land Trusts

Throughout the past several decades, land trusts in Seymour and Oxford have helped these towns acquire open spaces and conservation easements to hold these properties in trust. This work has resulted in the preservation of one contiguous area of approximately 1,200 acres that straddle Oxford's southwest border with Seymour, sloping down to the Housatonic River.

One of Oxford's recent purchases to add to this area, the Rockhouse Hill Sanctuary, was aided by the work of the Oxford Land Trust. The Trust is now the steward of the sanctuary, which includes more than 500 acres of woods, wetlands, ponds, and rocky outcroppings. Because the Sanctuary borders Oxford High School, a regulation cross country course is planned for the property. Volunteers such as the Oxford Youth Conservation Corps have helped clear and mark miles of trails, and many local Boy Scouts have used the site for completing eagle scout projects such as building bridges.

In addition to managing more than 200 acres of open space, the Seymour Land Trust (SLT) also maintains Legion Pond in Seymour, a popular fishing site and hiking

area that receives nearly 10,000 visitors each year. SLT purchased the site in 1989, and thousands of volunteer hours and philanthropic dollars have since helped restore the site, including making the park handicapped accessible.

Ansonia Nature Center

With a visitor center and more than 150 acres of woodlands and fields, including a two-acre pond, the Ansonia Nature Center is both a wildlife sanctuary and outdoor classroom. Formerly known as the Schrieber Dairy farm, the land was purchased by the city in 1964 with a federal grant and the park was dedicated to the citizens of Ansonia in 1977.

"In a dense older industrial community such as Ansonia, it is so important to have open space wherever you can get it," said Sheila O'Malley, Director of Economic Development for Ansonia. "Whether it is a pocket park or a place like the Nature Center, it provides much needed breathing room for our residents."

Derby

A large-scale community effort in Derby turned the Naugatuck River flood wall into a greenway trail that is one of the most popular recreation sites in the Valley. Planners overcame several major technical challenges, including three railroad crossings, to complete the project. Now, nearly a decade old, the river walk trail has been extended through Ansonia. The project has been so successful that communities along the Naugatuck River are committed to continuing the trail for 40 miles to Torrington, an effort that has attracted the support of the Council of Governments and the U.S. National Park Service. In December 2012, the Federal Government recognized the Naugatuck River Greenway by including it in an exclusive list

of local conservation priorities highlighted in the America's Great Outdoors Progress Report.

"The success of Derby's greenway sparked the effort to link the trail from Derby to Torrington," said Jack Walsh, Valley United Way President & COO, and member of the greenway committee. "You're recapturing the river. It became an immediate success and people from all over the area come to use it."

Shelton

On the other side of the Housatonic River, the City of Shelton has performed a significant amount of work over the years to preserve open spaces and farmlands. The city is composed of a combination of residential areas, corporate offices, and conserved lands, which include several redevelopment projects.

Terry Jones, of Jones Family Farms, said, "When it comes to land conservation and community spaces, it is all about balance – something I believe the City of Shelton has worked very hard to accomplish. The preserved lands, community gardens, trails and recreation sites such as the greenways offer a unique quality of life that both residents and businesses enjoy, and that is a beautiful thing."

The Valley is filled with numerous conservation areas that provide opportunities for recreation and wildlife and ecosystem preservation, which have such a positive impact on a community's overall economic development. These collective conservation efforts of natural, public land are enduring legacies that Valley residents of today are preserving for future generations.



When school is out for the summer, boys and girls at The Recreation Camp are engaged in crafts and waterfront activities and making lasting friendships.

For nearly a century, thousands of Valley boys and girls ages 5 to 15 have learned how to swim at The Recreation Camp in Derby.

In anticipation of its 100th anniversary next year, the board of directors is looking to build the endowment at VCF that helps support the camp to \$100,000.

"I have met so many people who attended The Rec Camp growing up," said VCF President & CEO Sharon Closius. "They have such wonderful memories of being down by the waterfront with their friends. It truly is a Valley landmark."

The Recreation Camp's story begins in 1915, when Fannie Osborne Kellogg donated more than two acres of land along the Housatonic River to local businessman Irving Peck for the purpose of creating a "summer swim camp" for Valley residents.

"Back then there were no state parks or public pools, and very few places for children to learn to swim, except in the river, which resulted in many unfortunate drownings," said former Camp Director and current United Way Executive Director Jack Walsh. "After Ms. Kellogg's generous donation,

Mr. Peck founded the camp, and its long, successful history began."

Peck, a prominent industrialist who was president of the Star Pin Company in Shelton, raised money for the camp by hosting a lobster feast at his home in Derby for businessmen, bankers, and professionals from the Valley. Although the names and faces of the donors have changed, the lobster dinner is still an annual event. It remains one of the camp's most successful fundraisers and contributes much needed revenue to help offset the cost of the camp so it remains affordable to all. Families who could otherwise

"We've got a winning formula, so to speak, and educational fun mixed with waterfront safety is what we remain excited about."

- John Rak,

The Recreation Camp Board of Directors

not afford to send their children to summer camp are offered scholarships. The 2015 annual lobster dinner is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10th.

Over the years, the camp has evolved into a full-day program that includes boating and other activities. Camp Director Mike Drew said that the professional staff provides fun and educational activities with diligent supervision on the waterfront.

In 2011, The Recreation Camp Endowment Fund at VCF was created to help ensure the camp's future.

"We wanted to build an endowment for capital improvements, new equipment, and camp scholarships," said John Rak, who has served on the camp's board of directors for 30 years. "We are very popular with families, and many come with multiple children. We're pretty much dialed-in with what our demographic wants out of a summer camp. We've got a winning formula, so to speak, and educational fun mixed with waterfront safety is what we remain excited about."

As part of the planning efforts behind next year's centennial celebration, the camp is looking to connect with alumni from throughout the years. If you attended

The Recreation Camp, please contact Mike Drew at mikedrew2@aol.com or like their Facebook page.

To be a part of the generous group of Valley residents who have sustained the Recreation Camp since the time of Fannie Osborne Kellogg and Irving Peck, contact John Ready, at VCF, 203-751-9162 or jready@valleyfoundation.org.

Save the Date!

Join us for VCF's 11th Annual Meeting at 5:00 pm on Thursday, April 30th at La Sala Banquet Hall at the Sons of Italy in Derby. Learn more and register at www.valleyfoundation.org.

VCF Sponsored Events

April

Boys & Girls Club 5K

The Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley 5K Run-Walk is scheduled for Sunday April 12th at 8:00 am. A \$25 registration fee includes a T-shirt. Race starts on the greenway, at the Division Street entrance near BJ's in Derby. Visit www.bgc-Inv.org.

8th Annual Men Who Cook

Nearly 100 men from the Valley will cook and serve their signature culinary dishes to benefit programs of TEAM, Inc. Saturday, April 25th at 6:00pm at Warsaw Park in Ansonia. Tickets are \$55. Contact Trish at twigglesworth@teaminc.org or visit www.teaminc.org to register.

May

Moving With Health Oriented Physical Education, Inc.

The CT Bike For HOPE ride is a family-oriented bike and walk fundraiser for survivors of brain and spinal cord injuries and diseases. It will take place on Saturday, May 23rd and encompassing completed sections of the Naugatuck Greenway. For more information, www.ctbikeforhope.org.

June

The Mary A. Schmecker Turtle Shell Fund

Soupstock Music and Arts Festival spans from June 20 - 21, 2015 at the Veteran's Memorial Park & Riverwalk in Shelton. Visit www.soupstockfestival.org for more information.



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Good News About the Valley



Help your favorite local nonprofits win thousands of dollars in gifts and prizes this spring during the sixth annual online giving event The Great Give®.

The 36-hour giving event runs from May 5 through May 6, raising donations through the site www.thegreatgive.org. The Great Give® is held in conjunction with the national day of giving, Give Local America.

The Valley Community Foundation will once again provide \$25,000 in matching and prize funds to encourage giving by people who live and/or work in the Valley. Donors with donor advised funds at VCF or The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven can also make contributions to nonprofits during The Great Give® from their funds.

"The Great Give is an incredible event and it is certainly something to be excited about," said Sharon

Closius, VCF President & CEO. "This year, we are trying to encourage more organizations to participate and new donors to support their favorite nonprofits, ultimately resulting in more dollars raised."

The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven created the online giving campaign to raise awareness about the work of local nonprofits serving its twenty-town region and help expand the base of donors to support their efforts. Last year, more than \$192,000 was raised for 29 nonprofits located in the Valley towns of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton.

To learn more about a local organization before you give, or to discover what is being done about issues that interest you, visit www.givegreater.org. With in-depth profiles of more than 200 local nonprofits, giveGreater.org® is your local resource for learning and giving.