

# THE *Avon* LAND TRUST

*Future generations may not remember our names, but they will certainly be glad that we were here.*

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

[www.avonlandtrust.org](http://www.avonlandtrust.org)

FALL 2018

## P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E



**Christine Graesser**  
*President, Avon Land Trust*

### THE FUTURE OF OPEN SPACE IN AVON

Earlier this year the Land Trust was contacted by a group opposing a proposed development on Nod Road in Avon. The group hoped the Land Trust might be interested in buying the property in question. I had to tell them that we did not have the funds, even if we wanted to consider the purchase. This is a common misperception of the Avon Land Trust. We are a small volunteer organization that has not aimed to raise funds for the acquisition of land. All of our land has been acquired through donation or swap.

The Land Trust has not chosen to take a position on Nod Road, but we encourage all Avon residents to keep informed about this and other issues that affect open space in Avon. Whether you are a newcomer or have roots going back generations, the quality of life in this town is affected with every acre that is deforested, paved over and built up. What starts with a development plan will impact flood resilience, wildlife habitat, traffic flow, the look and feel of a town, and demand for town services. What kind of town do you want Avon to be?

### STATE OF THE TRAILS

The Land Trust has been working hard to upgrade the popular trails on Talcott Ridge by installing new, more visible signs and clarifying the colors of the routes. However, we are struggling with the inevitability of tree falls on the trails that require chain saw work. We will probably need to hire a landscaping service to deal with this. If you would like to help by contributing to our Trail Maintenance fund, we would be grateful. ■

save the date  
**calendar**  
2018

**10.20.18**

#### **FALL FOLIAGE HIKE**

Saturday @ 1:00 PM  
Hike to Tower Toot  
Hazen Park Trail head to  
Heublein Tower  
(Raindate: Sunday, 10/21)

**11.15.18**

#### **ANNUAL MEETING**

Thursday @ 7:00 PM  
Community Room,  
Avon Free Public Library

# call of the wild



**"...my trip mentor taught me to see every day and every experience as an opportunity to be seized."**

"My NOLS experience was very impactful; it changed how I viewed life," Sydney explains. "I wanted to share what I learned with others and turning the experience into a Capstone project seemed like a great way to do that."

Last summer, Avon High School 2018 graduate, Sydney Walters, returned from a rigorous National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) trip in Alaska, ready to take on the world. The 30-day immersion experience was physically and mentally tough, says the young adventurer, recounting the experience of hiking glaciers with her every belonging on her back. "I was tired and homesick and spending a little too much time, at first, dwelling on what I didn't have on the trip. But my trip mentor taught me to see every day and every experience as an opportunity to be seized." So Sydney seized, and she brought that carpe diem spirit back east with her to Avon.

A lifelong nature lover, Sydney's natural wonder was nurtured through her Montessori schooling, grades preK-5. "We spent hours outside every day at school," she recalls fondly. "Our days were unstructured and we were encouraged to explore the outdoors." A hut-to-hut hiking trip through the presidential range in New Hampshire with her family (Mom, Terry; Dad, Chip; and Sister, Sarah, AHS 2015) during the summer of 2016, inspired Sydney to pursue a higher level of hiking, and to look into NOLS.

Capstone projects are a graduation requirement for seniors at AHS. Students come up with a compelling thesis, defend it through extensive research, and present it using multiple mediums to an audience of experts and other students.

Sydney's project focused on nature's positive influence on mental health. She established a website for students with articles about the healing and calming powers of being in nature, and links to healthy alternatives to digital recreation. Most of Sydney's research resulted from her own self-

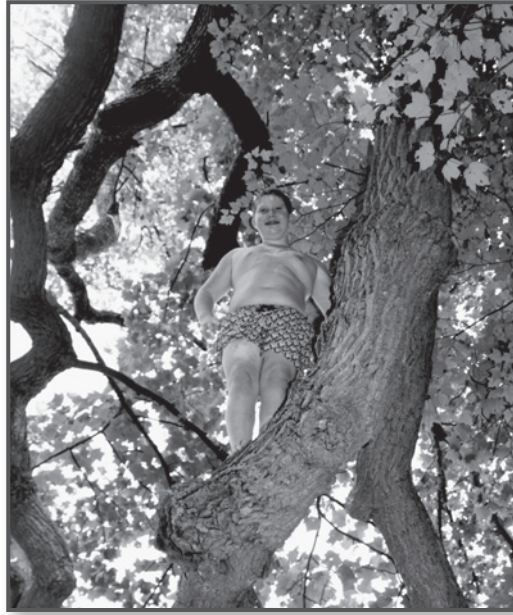


discovery. "I journaled daily on my trip, so seeing the evolution of my own thoughts and the lessons I learned, really contributed to my project," she explains. "My friends and classmates were suspect, and most of them couldn't tolerate a full technology fast like I did on my trip, but they were open to the little things they could do to connect more with nature."

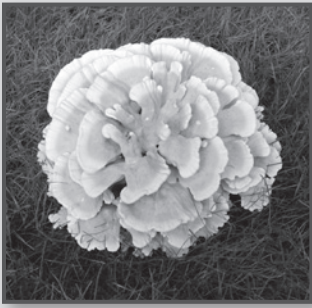
Sydney looks forward to continuing her connection with nature at beautiful Union College in New York, where she plans to study Geology and participate in the Outing Club and, hopefully, the Climbing Club (if they have one. Sydney recently took up rock climbing and practices regularly at a climbing gym in Glastonbury). She will also be a member of the field hockey team.

The Unplugged Learning Project was proud to support Sydney at her Capstone presentation and invites parents of young children to heed her advice: "If I could tell parents of young children one thing, it would be to wait and don't introduce technology too early. There is so much for kids to see and experience right in their own backyards." And that screen in their front of their faces only obscures the view. ■

# unplugging at countryside park



*Avon kids (and adults) on the west-side of town don't have to travel far for good unplugged fun. Countryside Park, located on Huckleberry Hill Road just north of the Company 4 firehouse, features picnic tables, a hiking loop, access to a network of hiking trails, and two ponds – perfect for winter and summer fun, as shown in the photos above.*



*Pale Chicken of the Woods.*  
*Laetiporus cincinnatus.*



*Ringless Honey Mushroom.*  
*Armillaria tabescens.*



*Spiny Puffball.*  
*Lycoperdon echinatum.*



*Parrot Waxcap.*  
*Gliophorus perplexa.*

# mushroom mania

That mushroom you tripped over on your recent hike in the woods is only the *tip* of the organism's *iceberg*. Mushrooms are akin to the fruit on fruit trees; they are the fruiting body the organism creates to facilitate reproduction. For example, an apple tree's seeds are packaged in a sweet, plump morsel that will fall to the ground and attract a hungry animal who will then, in turn through digestion, pass the seeds to new territory for germination and a new apple tree.

Mushrooms reproduce in a similar way. Their seeds (microscopic things called spores) cover parts of their exteriors and their entire structure is an excuse to spread those spores out in the world. **Gilled Mushrooms**, those with the many fanned, bladelike structures attached to the underside of the cap, use this mechanism to drop their spores into air currents, where they are lofted to new environments. **Stinkhorns** are very diverse in appearance –

some rather beautiful and flora-like, others looking more like tentacled marine creatures – but they all are covered with a foul-smelling, spore-soaked slime that attracts insects, who carry the spores away on their legs and wings.

The foundational organism - the part that corresponds to a fruit *tree*, where the mushroom corresponds to the fruit - is called a **mycelium** and it is found in the mushroom's substrate: the ground, leaves, a log, woodchips, etc. It is a mesh of tiny, threadlike cells that plow through the substrate, consuming nutrients. A mushroom's mycelium can be huge and extend for amazing distances. For example, scientists have reported that the Honey Mushroom's mycelium stretches for miles between trees.

Those mushrooms lining the trails you hike are amazing organisms, so watch your step! ■

Source for this information: <http://www.mushroomexpert.com/yard.html>

## wildlife at the Oakes

Recently, board member Rick Dubiel stopped by the Oakes Preserve on his way home from work and he was struck by the parade of wildlife he saw. Check out the photos he took: What an unbelievable wildlife gem the Oakes is!

During Rick's visit, there were a pair of mallards on the far shore – maybe nesting. A hawk circled above. The robin nest under construction near the gazebo is now ready for eggs. Nest box one has a momma merganser incubating a clutch of about 9 eggs. While crossing the brook from Reverknolls, a wild turkey was spotted – and her ground nest could be seen, upon further investigation.

At nest box two on the far side of the pond, a second momma merganser was incubating a larger clutch of about 13 pearlescent eggs. Our experts believe this is a hatchling



from last year who has returned home. We also suspect the momma mergansers lead their young hatchlings to the buttonbush pond, where there is more concealment and shelter from predators. Check out these photos! ■



# 2018 scholarship recipients

Hugh Blanchard Scholarship Winners:

## Emily Farrell, Carly Carpino, & Kelly Zheng



**Emily Farrell's** fascination with nature was inspired by her dad, an officer with the state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

"Growing up, I had a lot of exposure to our state's conservational efforts through my Dad," says Emily, "and I pursued this interest during high school by volunteering in the Wildlife Sanctuary at the Children's Museum in West Hartford." Emily has spent nearly 200 hours cleaning enclosures, preparing food, and providing enrichment for the various mammals, reptiles, and amphibians currently residing at the museum. Her work there, plus a 3-week trip to Namibia last summer, cemented her devotion to wildlife conservation. As if she wasn't busy enough volunteering, Emily also rowed on the AHS Crew team and managed the Swim & Dive team.

Growing up, the Farrells – Emily, Ryan (AHS 2016) and parents Cara and Paul – were always outside; hiking with their dog and heading north for ski trips in Vermont are two of their favorite pastimes. But Emily chose to head south for college: Eckerd College in sunny, historic St. Petersburg. "I chose Eckerd because it's so different from normal colleges," she explains. "The school's motto is 'Think Outside' and that is meant to be taken both literally and metaphorically." Situated on the Boca Ciega Bay, barefoot students accompanied by furry friends are a common sight. ("Eckerd is the pet-friendliest campus in America," Emily reports, and she brought her own ball python, Domi, to test that out.) But, despite the balmy weather, and countless opportunities for water recreation, it was Eckerd's widely respected science programming that sold Emily. She intends to major in Environmental Studies with a focus on conservation biology, and is having a hard time deciding what clubs to participate in simply because there are so many.

"Eckerd masterfully balances work and play and I think that that is really beneficial for

students," says Emily who looks forward to her own balance of studying and playing at this "beautiful slice of paradise."



Emily's classmate and fellow scholarship winner is **Carly Carpino** whose name is familiar to anyone who reads the local sports sections. The talented and

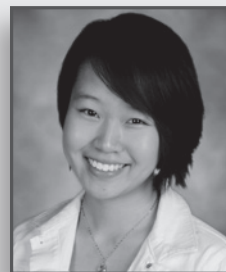
highly decorated athlete was a four-year track and field star at Avon High School. A heptathlete, she placed #2 in Connecticut and #1 in Class M in her event (which consists of hurdles, long jump, high jump, 200 and 800 M runs, javelin and shotput).

But it was Carly's passion for the outdoors that won her one of our scholarships this year. An avid hiker, Carly has hiked all of the local Appalachian Trail legs, as well as many of the White Mountain trails in New Hampshire. This summer, she traveled with her family (mom Kristin, Dad Carl, and sister Hannah, AHS 2015) to Colorado for a hiking trip there. Her hiking time may be limited in the coming years, however, as Carly will continue her athletic and academic career at Lehigh University where she will study in the university's well-respected Engineering program. Her major will be Environmental Engineering.

"I can't specialize yet," she explains, "but I'm hoping to focus on water treatment and how we can better clean water before introducing it back into our rivers and oceans." Another option she is considering is Clean Energy.

While at Avon High, Carly was a member (and captain) of the Cross-Country Team, and member of the indoor track team senior year; she played basketball during grades 9-11, and competed in the heptathlon and hurdles for four years on the Track and Field team. She was also a member and senior officer of Avon's National Honor Society chapter.

Carly is grateful for the land trust scholarship award and intends to put it towards her purchase of books – and perhaps a new pair of hiking shoes ;).



Our third 2018 scholarship recipient is **Kelly Zheng** took a break from tending her organic garden of zucchini, peppers, tomatoes and eggplant, to speak

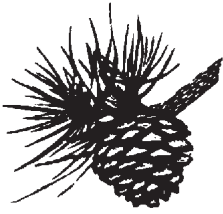
with us about her future plans. Also a 2018 graduate of Avon High, Kelly will attend Amherst College this fall; she is considering a pre-med track and will study biology and anthropology to start.

While at AHS, Kelly was an exemplary student and winner of numerous academic awards. An ACHIEVE intern, Kelly interned at Canton Valley Dental as a junior and was then offered a job by the practitioners there, which she continues during breaks and summers. "I'm really fortunate because they know and trust me so I get to do some interesting and important 'chairside' work for the dentists," she explains.

Kelly was a member of the AHS Sierra Club and a captain of the school's Envirothon team which competes with others schools in five stations (forestry, soils, wildlife, aquatics, and current events) and is scored on subject matter knowledge, the ability to identify organisms, and more. This year, the club's third, Kelly's team finished 5th in the state!

Daughter of Wei and David Zheng, and older sister to Julia, Kelly is an accomplished pianist who has studied at the Hartt school since childhood. She intends to continue making music at Amherst through either their chamber music ensemble or orchestra. And she will definitely continue to find joy and relaxation in the beautiful outdoors of western Massachusetts.

**Emily, Kelly and Carly** wish to thank the land trust and the Blanchard family for the scholarship funds that will help them pursue their dreams – and they plan to return the favor by being good stewards of the environment for future scholarship recipients. ■



# THE *Avon* LAND TRUST

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## THE *Avon* LAND TRUST

### membership form

Yes, I/we would like to make a tax-deductible annual membership donation to the Avon Land Trust, at the following level:

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 Oak Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 Maple Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Birch Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50 Family Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 30 Individual Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 25 Senior/Student Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ Please allocate my donation to the Unplugged Learning fund
- \_\_\_\_\_ Please allocate my donation to a trail maintenance fund

name \_\_\_\_\_

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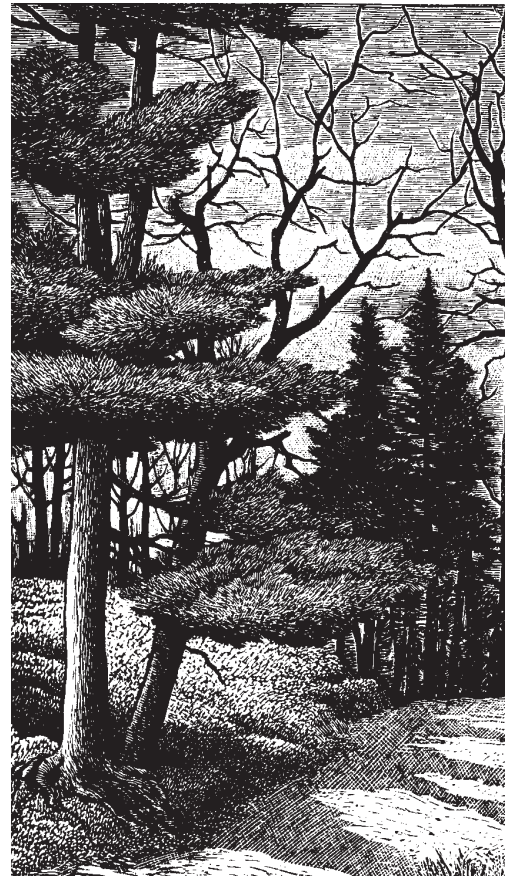
\_\_\_\_\_ I/We wish to remain anonymous

Please make checks payable to The Avon Land Trust, and mail to: The Avon Land Trust, P.O. Box 267, Avon, CT 06001.  
... or pay on-line by visiting our website: [www.avonlandtrust.org](http://www.avonlandtrust.org).

Please let us know if you can help the ALT in any of these other ways:

- My employer will match my contribution.
- I would like information on how to include ALT in my will or estate plan.
- I am interested in donating land to the ALT
- I would like to help the ALT as a member-volunteer

Thank you for becoming a 2018 member of the Avon Land Trust!



The Avon Land Trust is 501(c)(3) certified, so your donation is tax deductible. If your employer offers a matching gift program, or participates in the United Way, please consider making the Avon Land Trust a beneficiary so your money can go even further.