

# Total Access: When completed next spring, Powow Hill Trails will connect extensive system

By Carol Feingold/amesbury@cnc.com

Thu Nov 15, 2007, 02:24 PM EST

AMESBURY - The final piece in the puzzle will fall into place next spring when the Lake Gardner Improvement Association (LGIA) completes the Powow Hill Trails thanks to support from Lowe's Home Improvement and the Newburyport Five Cents Savings Bank.

Lowe's recently gave the group the boost it needed by awarding LGIA the annual Lowe's Heroes Award providing \$1,500 along with volunteers from the store to help with construction work.

"The selection of the LGIA to receive this award gave the group the momentum it needed to move ahead with planning," LGIA member Bruce McBrien said, "and when the Newburyport Five Cents Savings Bank awarded us another \$2,000, the project was well on its way to completion."

The LGIA was organized by Mary Schuberth to repair the Lake Gardner dam after it sustained flood damage in 1996. Once the dam work was completed, the group went on to lobby to keep the Lake Gardner Beach gates open for year-round access. The group didn't stop there.

The LGIA is committed to promoting recreational use of the beach, lake and trails that comprise the green space along the side of Powow Hill in Amesbury. LGIA is made up of members and volunteers from the community who view the Lake Gardner green space as an important asset to Amesbury, and are working to improve and extend its accessibility to all. This spring the building of the trails will be complete.

## SEEKING ACCESSIBILITY

"I moved here 16 years ago and it was frustrating as heck to live here and not be able to access those trails and recreational activities," said McBrien, who lives on High Street directly opposite the entrance to Lake Gardner Beach. "You couldn't even put a kayak in and paddle the Powow (River). You couldn't snowshoe there.

"We started looking at things like passive recreational use. We wanted to be able to walk, snowshoe, bike, and cross country ski along the Old Stagecoach Road from the beach parking lot to Camp Kent."

One section of the trail started to stick out like a sore thumb.

"When you walk a little ways from Lake Gardner Beach past the cul de sac, it becomes muck," McBrien said. "Once we get beyond the area of nasty muck, we have an area of very saturated land that is very close to the water level."

The answer to the problem was to build a 75-foot long elevated boardwalk across the worst of the muck. The LGIA added a boardwalk and a suspended bridge to the southern trailhead at Lake Gardner, allowing walkers and hikers to pass over a low-lying area that was often impassible after rain. The town funded that project with a matching \$3,000 grant from the Provident Community Foundation.

Now, with financial, material, and volunteer support from Lowe's and the Newburyport Five Cents Savings Bank, the LGIA will address a similar issue at the northern trailhead from Battis Farm to Powow Hill.

"Lowe's Heroes is a company-wide volunteer initiative where each year Lowe's employees nationwide dedicate thousands of volunteer hours and a budget to address individual safety concerns of their own communities," said Cassandra Campbell,

Team Captain Lowes Heroes of Seabrook, N.H. “The reason it was awarded to LGIA was actually happenstance. Bruce was a customer of Lowe’s when his house had been struck by lightning and received extensive damage.

“He became a familiar face and worked with every department here. He approached me one day to say ‘hi’ and I asked him if he was finally done with his home.

“He mentioned the LGIA program and I let him know that I was the team captain for Lowe’s Heroes and that we were looking for a project. He dropped off LGIA’s ideas and I submitted them to Lowe’s corporate. We were approved and will be providing most of the lumber for the project.”

After receiving the award from Lowe’s, McBrien approached Richard Eaton, President and CEO of the Newburyport Five Cents Savings Bank, who came through with \$2,000.

“We feel investing to help protect and preserve Amesbury’s natural resources is the right thing to do,” Eaton said. “Organizations such as the Lake Gardner Improvement Association embrace an important mission: environmental stewardship. Our entire team is proud to contribute to LGIA’s mission by partnering to enhance and extend the hiking and walking trails located from Battis Farm to Powow Hill for everyone, of all abilities, to enjoy.”

## TIME TO CONNECT

With this support from the private sector, the LGIA is ready to go.

“The initial portion of the trail includes some low areas that also become nearly impassable after rain with deep mud,” McBrien said. “This has prevented access to the northernmost component of our Riverwalk trail system, as well as the fields at Battis Farm and the Camp Kent Environmental Center beyond. While there is still much work to be done, these grants will fund the bulk of the materials needed to complete the project and construction is projected for next May.”

At that point the Riverwalk will connect to the Upper Millyard creating seven miles of trails along the Powow River from Stop and Shop on Route 110 to Camp Kent. The Riverwalk eventually will be extended to Salisbury along the former railroad beds.

“We will have a wonderful green belt from New Hampshire to the beach,” McBrien said.

When completed the trail elements will include: the Powow Hill trail from Lake Gardner Beach to Battis Farm, Lake Gardner to Batchelder Park, Batchelder Park to Battis Farm, Battis Farm to Camp Kent, the Amesbury Elementary School (AES) Woodland Trail, AES Woodland Trail to Batchelder Park, and Powow Hill to Battis Boardwalk.

“People want to see this happen,” McBrien said. “It’s been a community-wide effort, a public-private partnership all along.

“The Planning Board has been working with developers to ensure that there is public access via existing and new trails connecting the Lake Gardner area and the Powow Hill recreational area,” said Amesbury Town Planner Nipun Jain. “The network of trails provides passive recreational opportunities to the public and neighborhoods in around Powow Hill. Bruce McBrien has been very helpful in assisting the Planning Board and staff in preserving the trail network.”

“The project is very important in that it continues to improve the access around Lake Gardner,” said Amesbury Town Engineer Robert Desmarais. “This access is vital to preserving and improving the lake as the more people who use the lake result in more people who will take in interest the lake’s well being.

“Prior to the efforts of the Lake Gardner Improvement Association to open the Lake Gardner year round, the lake was only accessible to persons living on the lake and beach goers. Now that the lake and trail system is used all year round by hundreds of people and because of this, the Lake Gardner Improvement Association has been able to foster an active community and recruit numerous volunteers for their efforts to improve the lake for everyone to enjoy. The Engineering Department has worked with the Lake Gardner Improvement Association to provide permitting and design guidance for the project.

Back in 2005, Desmarais helped LGIA with all the permitting, wetlands flagging and Conservation Commission work. Builder Doug Masi brought generators and power tools to the work site where sections were pre-built and then set into

place. Landscapers Sean Curran and Bruce Bourassa collaborated to oversee the installation of the stepping stones.

In 2006, Wojcicki & McPartland Development built new homes on the former Atlantic Forest ski area. Working with Amesbury Town Planner Nipun Jain, a path to the summit through the development from the AES Woodland Trail became part of the project and now is in use.

Now in 2007, the donated materials in the Lowe's Heroes Award have to be delivered to LGIA well before next spring. Amesbury Industrial Supply stepped up to the plate and said it would store the materials for LGIA construction was ready to start on the Powow Hill to Battis Boardwalk this spring.

“The boardwalk will span approximately 300 feet of nearly perennially wet pathway,” McBrien said, “making the trail truly accessible year round.”

Comments (0)

Leave a Comment:

**Add Comment**

Powered by: [SEO by eLocalListing](#), [Advertiser profiles](#), [Business directory by Planet Discover](#), [Zope Corp.](#)