

GREENWAYS

Newsletter of
D&R Greenway Land Trust
Volume 27, Number 3
Winter 2018

Land Preservation Update

A new milestone of 302 properties permanently preserved by D&R Greenway since 1989—20,461 acres of land—is six times larger than Washington Crossing State Park where General George Washington crossed the Delaware River on December 25, 1776.

Trees, Sky, Healing Power — Our Gift to You

Open your ears and go outside. It's really that simple.

D&R Greenway's newest trail is more than a pathway: it is an entirely new way to connect people and nature. The new "Healing Trail" on our Conservation Campus in Princeton celebrates nature's power to make people feel better.

You know that boost that you feel when you forget about your troubles and just sit in the sun? Or the way that you know your muscles are growing stronger because each time you walk up a hill it gets easier?

The Healing Trail owes its existence to one remarkable woman. Her extraordinary response to illness led D&R Greenway to create this story-based trail that spreads happiness like colorful wildflowers in a field. The idea

for a Healing Trail was planted by Edie Howard, who in 2013 preserved her farm with D&R Greenway. Edie inspired all of us with her buoyant spirit. She and her husband Charlie walked the perimeter of their 30-acre farm every day, hand-in-hand. During those walks, Edie allowed the beauty of nature to heal her soul and strengthen her body. Now the idea that Edie passed on—to send out a positive spirit and inspire others to find joy in nature—will live on to everyone's benefit.

Free and open to all, the Healing Trail is a "wellness walk." Visitors use a no cost smart phone app called TravelStorys to listen to inspirational readings about nature and healing as they follow pathways around Greenway Meadows. You can listen to the stories at your own pace, whenever you want. Each story is digitally linked to a geographic point,



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so it can play automatically as you walk along the path, or you can cue it up on demand.

The app is not a field guide — it's more like a bit of birdsong whispered into your ear, saying, "Stop here ... look here ... listen here. Breathe. Be present and be healed."

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A wheelchair and walker-accessible trail in nature available to everyone. (photo: Maia Reim, Princeton Photography Club)

Healing Trail

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More and more scientific research confirms what people used to know instinctively, before we “evolved” to spend most of our time indoors. Nature heals us. It makes us feel better, by affecting our body’s internal processes. Being in nature lowers our heart rate and blood pressure, and increases emotions of well-being and empathy. We feel more connected to social networks as well as to the plants and wildlife in our environment. Nature improves our physical as well as mental health, reducing the risk of, among other things, type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease and premature death.

Who doesn’t need healing—of some sort? Whether rehabilitating from a knee operation, recovering from chemotherapy or de-stressing from a too-busy life, all of us can enjoy the power of nature to heal and refresh.

The Healing Trail gives people a place to go to experience nature’s benefits, and to contemplate the variety of nature’s

restorative ways. As an audio companion to physical movement, the Healing Trail guide works its magic the way nature itself does. The sound of the human voice telling us stories elicits our intuitive response, an openness to comprehend deep truths.

There are fifteen stories on the Healing Trail. Big-picture, contemplative themes—including ‘Emergence,’ ‘Transformation’ and ‘Homeward’—were envisioned by Andrew Mead, who walked the trail, selected and mapped each story location. These themes resonate with a characteristic such as a view, a natural feature, a building, or a garden. They set the tone for writer Susan Charkes, who wove together a unique narrative for each place. Stories may include poetry or quotations from well-known writers, or compelling personal tales of healing shared by individuals. ‘Homeward’ features song lyrics written for the trail by Dr. Lyn Ransom, the founding director of Voices Chorale. Professional narrators tell each story with emotion that makes one stop and think—and smile.

Along the way the trail invites contemplation. For example, in a meadow the theme is transformation. Here’s an excerpt:

“The meadow’s colors change between green and brown; its structure changes between spacious and crowded; its sound, between silent and raucous.

“So what is a meadow if it is not what it was or will be? A meadow, a living system, is always becoming the next version of itself.

“And who are you, motionless in the meadow that is changing around you? What is a self? The soul unchanging? or the person whose experiences moment-to-moment, year-to-year accrete like sand in a stream?”

The Healing Trail can be followed in any direction, just as the path to recovery is unique to every individual. The trail includes the Johnson Education Center, the YWCA Princeton’s Breast Cancer Resource Center and Meredith’s Garden. It winds

Newly Preserved Land Fills Gap in the Stony Brook Greenway

From the Japanese teahouse at the edge of a pond, the landscape is serene. Across the Stony Brook is Mercer Meadows Park. All around this residential property, the land is permanently preserved. Now, this land that has hosted D&R Greenway gatherings, and that was once home to a private collection of outdoor sculptures, will remain a part of the Stony Brook greenway—forever.

In contrast to the north side of Elm Ridge Road where new development has created large mounds of disturbed Earth, the south side of the roadway remains a swath of green. Houses and farms on large acreage back onto the Stony Brook, a high quality waterway classified by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection as a Category-1 stream.

The Stony Brook floodplain and the forest on the newly preserved land is habitat for the State-threatened Coopers hawk and bald eagle. The majestic great blue heron, listed by the State’s Endangered and Nongame Species program as a Species of Concern, can



Looking from the property across to Mercer Meadows Park

be seen fishing along the waterway. The State endangered triangle floater, a water quality-sensitive freshwater mussel, has been found in the stream.

Migrations of birds, mussels and wildlife are mirrored by the migration of people to and from this land. Before moving cross-country, the landowners wanted to ensure that

this 31-acre property would never be subdivided. Their generous donation of a conservation easement to D&R Greenway permanently protects the floodway. The view from Elm Ridge Road remains pastoral and peaceful.

In this holiday season, we are grateful for this foresight that keeps our local community green. 🌿

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through Greenway Meadows, up and down hills, on natural trails and paved paths. A portion is wheelchair-accessible.

Looking through a lens creates a close-up view of what the Healing Trail offers. As a leader in the Princeton Photography Club, Sheila Geisler organized outings for photographers whose artistic expression will be featured in the app. Sheila says of her experience, "You walk a trail... Do you really see the details, the personality, the individual beauty of each of the many trails you walk? While looking through my lens I focus on the beauty of each area. I spend time, I ask questions, I learn about the nature that

surrounds me. My camera forces me to look at my trail hike in a different way. I connect with that trail, it brings me an inner peace, a quiet time just for me."

On the trail you can hear a reading on the theme of family, which includes this passage:

"You're with us. Your family. Your brother, the soaring hawk. Your sister, the shape-shifting cloud. Your cousins, the industrious sowbugs, spiders, and scarab beetles. Your aunts and uncles, the stolid trees. Your grandparents, the scent of leaves on soft winds. Your great-grandparents, the rocks hidden

deep under hills. Your nieces and nephews, the seeds pended to feathery grass. Your parents, the sound of burbling water rising from the stream. We are here with you, helping you, healing you."

All of the many individuals who contributed to the Healing Trail are part of our extended D&R Greenway family. You're invited. Join your family. Follow the Healing Trail. The gifts to you will include perspective, happiness, peace. 🌿



Linda J. Mead
President & CEO

The Healing Trail project was made possible through the generosity of its sponsors:
Family and Friends of Edie Howard, Horizon Foundation, Inc., The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey,
and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton.

In the Company of Trees: Honoring our Connection to the Sacred Power, Beauty and Wisdom of Trees

Talk & Book Signing and Meditation Walk

Thursday, January 24, 2019
Talk & Inaugural Book-Signing
Program: 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 21, 2019
Workshop & Outdoor Walk: 5:00 p.m.
To RSVP, call (609) 924-4646 or
rsvp@drgreenway.org

Come – see the forest through the trees

Andrea Fereshteh found her peace and passion in the woods near her home in Pennington. A native of the mountains of Asheville, NC, Andrea grew up climbing all the trees in her yard and hiking the Blue Ridge Parkway. After moving to New Jersey in 2011, her journeys on local trails led her to write a blog post for the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy that led to Simon & Schuster asking her to author an inspiring and poetic book about trees.

The newly published book, *In the Company of Trees*, comes out in mid-January. The 270-page book is full of short essays, inspirational quotes and color photographs that can be enjoyed piece-by-piece, allowing the reader to savor the experience.

Andrea credits the lands preserved by



D&R Greenway Land Trust and other local conservation groups as having inspired her writing about the ancient and enduring wisdom of trees.

"Practicing being present in nature has been a truly transformative experience for me," Andrea says. "We are so lucky to have so many amazing preserved natural spaces in our area. They are incredible resources for experiencing firsthand the magic of nature, and I am thrilled to encourage others to get outside and take advantage of our local trails by sharing this new book."

A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Georgetown University, Andrea writes for educational institutions, nonprofits and freelance publications. She has been practicing yoga and meditation for more than a decade and leads weekly meditation sessions in the tradition of John Main, OSB. Her interest in blending mindful and contemplative practices with nature led her into the woods of Central New Jersey where she has practiced forest bathing for the past two years. Her husband and three lively sons provide a constant source of joy and inspiration.

As the seasons change from winter to early spring, the author will lead a meditation workshop focused on trees, healing and nature. Beginning at the Johnson Education Center, participants will walk through Greenway Meadows Park, pausing to ignite the senses at different points and experience the benefits of being immersed in nature.

Join us to hear Andrea's magical tale and learn about the magnificent life of trees and their invaluable place in our lives. And then come for a walk in the woods — to rediscover your own connection to the world outside. 🌿

D&R Greenway Land Trust, Inc.

D&R Greenway Land Trust, Inc., is a regional, 501(c)(3) nonprofit land conservancy dedicated to preserving and caring for land, and inspiring a conservation ethic.

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May You Find Peace In Nature In The New Year



*"There is a serene and settled majesty
to woodland scenery that enters into
the soul and delights and elevates it,
and fills it with noble inclinations."*

— Washington Irving

Art Exhibits

Lovely as a Tree, through January 25.

Healing Trails, featuring the Princeton
Photography Club and seven trails.
February 4–April 5.

Reception: Fri., Feb. 15, 5:30–7:30 p.m. RSVP
Galleries open weekdays, 9:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Please call prior to visit.



*"Origins" by Photographer Christopher DeGrazia.
From the Juried Art Exhibit Lovely as a Tree at the Johnson Education Center.*