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Press release

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Greenway Gala Affirms Importance, Successes, of Preserving Land

New Healing Trail App Announced

Press Release

Princeton, N.J.—In gratitude for all the land D&R Greenway Land Trust has preserved (more than 20,000 acres!), nature can give back in the form of sunny skies. This was certainly the case on May 6, during the annual Greenway Gala. Dark skies and rain may have threatened; but rain held off so that guests could enjoy cocktails on the Ellsworth terrace. Lush spring foliage and bird song served as yet another reminder of the rewards of preserving natural spaces.

The crowd moved indoors for the presentation of the Donald B. Jones Award to Ted Thomas, a stalwart member of the NJ Trails Association trail crew -- which quite literally moves boulders. Ted Thomas's interest in land preservation grew from his lifelong passion for hiking. "It's the view when you get to the top," he says of the enjoyment he receives, as well as the chance to be outdoors. "I'd rather be hiking on a trail than walking down a street."

The 89-year-old, along with his wife, Penny, hikes out west every summer, frequently joined by their four adult children. When he's not hiking, he's building trails, along with D&R Greenway Past Board Chair Alan Hershey, creating trails at Baldpate Mountain, Mountain Lakes and nearby Greenway Meadows. In some ways, he adds, trail building is more fun than hiking. "It's a nice way of getting out in the country and having something to do."

As a member of D&R Greenway's Board of Trustees from 2008 to 2016, Thomas served on the land preservation and land stewardship committees, which guides the management and care of D&R Greenway preserves and easements.

Happily, there will be one more mountain from which to seek the view! D&R Greenway President & CEO Linda Mead announced that the land trust is purchasing an entire mountain right here in central New Jersey. "We are under contract to purchase Pennington Mountain in Hopewell, a 167-acre woodland property that will literally take us over the top as we reach 300 properties preserved since our founding in 1989," Mead enthused. "I know that Ted Thomas and the NJ Trails crew will enjoy the hiking and trail building opportunities that will make this mountain accessible for birdwatching, hiking and nature study."

In honor of Thomas, Mead revealed to the public for the first time that D&R Greenway will soon offer the Healing Trails app that can be downloaded, for free, to a smart phone to guide a walk along the Greenway Meadows trail, where users will learn about the relationship of health and nature while being inspired by personal stories. The Healing Trails app is supported by Robert Wood Johnson

Hospital at Hamilton and Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, and is a partnership with the YWCA Princeton Breast Cancer Resource Center and the Princeton Photography Club.

Affirming the need for healing trails, D&R Greenway Board of Trustees President and former Princeton Township Mayor Phyllis Marchand spoke of the reasons she is so committed to preserving land in central New Jersey. When she moved to Princeton in 1966, “I discovered the marvelous open space and trails on which to walk and run as I trained for marathons,” says Marchand. Later, “as mayor I saw the cost effectiveness of open space, as opposed to development. But it’s not just the economic reasons—it’s the beauty and the health and recreation benefits to the community.”

When Marchand began her personal battle with non-Hodgkins lymphoma, “I found the best possible medicine is open space—it needs no prescription or referral, and a walk in the woods is free.” The Healing Trails app fulfills this “prescription.”

Last but not least, Marchand is committed to preserving open space because of her grandchildren. “Today our environment is in peril, and I remain involved so that my children and grandchildren as well as yours and all the generations to come can enjoy the beauty of nature and all that it brings.”

Stephanie Jones, daughter of the award’s namesake, says of the annual Greenway Gala, “I love this special event because it is the one time in the year that an unsung environmental hero is honored and celebrated for a life dedicated to permanently saving open space for future generations and making it accessible for all to enjoy.”

D&R Greenway’s Donald B. Jones Conservation Award is presented annually to a person who embodies D&R Greenway’s mission to inspire a conservation ethic. Donald B. Jones (1911-1994) was a determined preservationist who committed his time and resources to saving the land and historic landmarks that give our region its sense of place. Awardees display a similar selfless generosity, making a significant impact on the landscape. The Donald B. Jones Conservation Award has been given to a former Governor, a Congressman, a community and a 10-year-old environmental activist. What they have in common is a love for the land and a commitment to action that results in land preservation.

D&R GREENWAY LAND TRUST IS IN ITS 29TH YEAR of preserving and protecting natural lands, farmlands and open spaces throughout central and southern New Jersey. Through continuous preservation and stewardship -- caring for land and easements to ensure they remain protected and ecologically healthy in perpetuity -- D&R Greenway nurtures a healthier and more diverse environment for people and wild species in seven counties. Accredited by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, D&R Greenway’s mission is to preserve and care for land and inspire a conservation ethic, now and for the future. Since its founding in 1989, D&R Greenway has permanently preserved more than 20,000 acres, an area greater than 20 times the size of New York City’s Central Park, including 30 miles of trails open to the public.

The Johnson Education Center, a circa 1900 restored barn at One Preservation Place, Princeton, is D&R Greenway’s home. Through programs, art exhibits and related lectures, D&R Greenway inspires greater public commitment to safeguarding land.