

Donald B. Jones (1911-1994) was a determined preservationist committed to saving the land and historic landmarks. The Donald B. Jones Conservation Award is presented annually to an individual who embodies Donald B. Jones' passion and D&R Greenway's mission to preserve and care for land and inspire a conservation ethic. As D&R Greenway recognizes its 30th Anniversary, it was a unanimous decision to present this prestigious award to Alan M. Hershey.

Alan Hershey epitomizes D&R Greenway's focus on Land for Life, now and forever. One of our organization's very first supporters and a trustee beginning in 1989, Alan applied knowledge from his career at Mathematica Research to ensuring D&R Greenway's financial management as our Treasurer, and later led our Board as Chair . He helped monitor our conservation easements and became a trail blazer in more ways than one.

Alan's love for the land and active stewardship of our natural resources began in his childhood with family experiences. Growing up in Pleasantville, New York, Alan's love for the outdoors was nurtured by his father, who took Alan and his older brother on hiking, camping and canoe trips to the Adirondacks, fishing trips to Quebec, and family vacations in Maine and Nova Scotia. As a teenager, Alan hiked and biked in Europe and Mexico, and after majoring in political science at Amherst College, he earned a master's degree in public affairs at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School.

In 2004, here in the Princeton area, Alan created and attracted an enthusiastic group of trail builders. He secured funding and led the effort to create a website, njtrails.org, to encourage people to enjoy the outdoors. His trail crew now includes more than 200 volunteers, ranging in age from 16 to 90, some of whom work every weekend from September to May, clearing routes, digging trails into hillsides, building bridges and stone steps with hand tools, and moving boulders with crowbars and nets.

Alan always reminds his crew that "It's not about how strong you are, it's about smarts." They respect his words and learn from the stories he tells. The very first trail his team built was on Baldpate Mountain in Hopewell. At least one trail crew volunteer remarked on how Alan carefully planned everything before a single tool was lifted, making sure that teamwork will go smoothly and that the trail will last for many years.

Alan says his interest in land preservation and public access trails came from living and travelling in Europe. When he returned home he became frustrated by all the "no trespassing" signs. At the time, he complained to New Jersey Future's Tom O'Neill, who told him he'd heard about a new group forming, D&R Greenway Land Trust. Alan joined the board six months later and served as treasurer for more than a decade and a half. When he became Board Chair, he made the organization's Land for Life capital campaign his number one priority (and continued even after he left the board).

Alan's heartstrings remain tied to Maine where he and his two brothers inherited the family "camp" on Abrams Pond. In 2016, while walking with his wife, Phyllis Frakt, through the undeveloped forest along the eastern shore of Abrams Pond, he had an epiphany: that he

wanted to put some of his own resources into preservation of that beautiful land, so others would be able to enjoy it. He purchased 135 acres of forest, including more than half a mile of lakeshore, linking the lake to a large state wildlife management area. He then donated it to the Frenchman Bay Conservancy. Alan decided not to name the area for himself, but to call it Abraham's Woods, after Abraham Donnell, one of the region's early settlers in the 18th century. He is working closely with the Conservancy to plan and fund the creation of a four-mile trail network on the new preserve.

Alan has also made protecting water quality in Abrams Pond a priority. He has helped invigorate the small Abrams Pond Association, and became its president a few years ago. Every year, he writes a newsletter, providing a mix of guidance on how property owners can behave in "Lake Smart" fashion and interpretations of historical and scientific information about the lake and its surroundings. Over a four-year period, he helped shepherd the APA into a partnership with the local county Soil and Water Conservation District to secure a grant to address non-point source pollution. With these funds in hand, Alan has been leading efforts to recruit watershed property owners to address erosion that carries phosphorus-laden soils into the lake and raises the risk of algae blooms.

Alan has been connected to his communities all his life. He often notes that many people come to build trails to find peace in their lives. They realize the physical activity in nature -- being out there and working with other people to move a big stone or dig a trail into a hillside -- is a unique opportunity. Not only is it good for the mind and spirit, but it's good for the body. One of the crew members, a retired cardiologist, told Alan that trail building uses all the major muscle groups which is good for the heart. Alan packs a first aid kit but says he's only used it for skin abrasions. The only requirement for trail building, he says, is to be willing to get dirty.

When he's not building trails, Skyping with his grandchildren, or hiking, Alan can be found in his fine woodworking shop, designing and building furniture, or in his garden, where he grows vegetables and ornamentals and prunes his own trees. He has made a habit of encouraging others to garden by raising and giving away tomato plants. In addition to his legacy work here at D&R Greenway, Alan serves as treasurer for the board of the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail Association and vice chair of the Mercer County Open Space Board.