

Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition

RIVER RUN – Fall Newsletter

Riverwalk Nears Completion, Caleb's Dock by Rich Youngken

For those of you who have not been to Main Street recently, there is a buzz now about the construction phase of the Riverwalk. It is finally near completion. The gateway is open by the Fish Ladder. The decking is complete, benches have been installed, the landscape planted, and the view is sublime – it is almost a Monet landscape with water lilies, willows, and the Footbridge now scheduled for a makeover in Phase II. I sat on Caleb's Dock in deck chairs in the sun with Barbara Davis on a recent weekend while URI students and volunteers cleared and spruced up the Wakefield Dam and the river at the Church Street Bridge. People strolled by, some with children in strollers. We thought about Caleb's vision for the dock and how right he was – what a spectacular spot for launching a kayak or canoe or rowing skiff, for messing about on the Saugatucket within shouting distance of Main Street. Caleb was truly one of South County's adopted characters and favorite people. He saw the huge potential of the river at Main Street's backdoor. Caleb was one of the primary and early movers of the Coalition and a true advisor within the Board of Directors. He was a champion for the dock, avowing that whatever we accomplished for a river walkway, the canoe dock had to be part of the equation. He was absolutely right about it. We owe him a big thank you. Caleb passed away before the dream became physical reality, but the dock is now built and to us it will always be Caleb's Dock.

Lecture Series Underway, River Party Fund-Raiser October 9 by Rich Youngken

The Fall Lecture series is attracting attention. With a theme about using the river, messing about with boats on the river, and discovering the river as a big bird paradise, we have been enthralled and entertained. So far our guest speakers have been Tony Robinson and Peter Tangney of Wildwood Outfitters, and Michael Tucker of Audubon Society of Rhode Island. Vivian Maxson of Born to Be Wild Nature Center brought a live hawk to our recent Thursday show on Hawks and Raptors. Daryl Anderson, an owner of Ram Point Marina and President of the South County Museum talked about boats, boat building and land change in Upper Salt Pond at the mouth of the river and led us on a walking tour of the boat-building area. To all of our speakers and sponsors, we give a hearty thank you!!

On October 9th we are having a **Wakefield Tree Tour** with ACT-SK which begins at Caleb's Dock. Learn more about our glorious trees near the Saugatucket starting at 12:30PM. Then join us that afternoon for a **River Party** at River Lodge on the shores of Peace Dale Pond starting at 3PM. Bring family and friends to celebrate the beginning fall foliage, a terrific summer, and our successes. This is a fund-raiser for us and there will be a silent auction.

How to get there and where to meet:

Caleb's Dock, Saugatucket River Walkway, Wakefield - *Look for the town parking lot behind the downtown Main Street commercial buildings; Caleb's Dock is near the footbridge to the Wakefield Elementary School.*

River Lodge, Peace Dale - *Located at 188 Oakwoods Drive, it's the 10th house on the left counting the red cape at the entrance after entering The Oaks in Peace Dale from Kingstown Road (Route 108). Look for the yellow Japanese Fish on a pole beside a long evergreen hedge.*

Students Learn Stewardship by Robin Wildman

In September 5th grade students at Wakefield Elementary School learned the importance of keeping our beautiful river and surrounding waterways healthy. On a warm late summer day, students stretched across the pedestrian bridge and conducted tests on the river's water to determine its status. Students in three different groups performed tests for temperature, turbidity, ph, dissolved oxygen, nitrogen, fecal coliform and phosphorus content. They also learned that by encouraging their families to switch to non-phosphate detergents and non-toxic fertilizers and pesticides that they could improve water quality. On that September day, the Saugatucket River's water tested fair in most areas. In other words, there is work to be done but the water is not as polluted as some people may think. In October the 5th graders will help to teach the 2nd grade to do these tests and all will join together on October 17th to conduct tests and celebrate World Water Quality Monitoring Day.

Blue Trail by Rich Youngken

Dorothy Devine's idea for a canoe-kayak trail – or water trail – on the Saugatucket linking Peace Dale with the Ocean is becoming a reality! This is a fantastic idea. Our effort in clearing Wakefield Dam this September is paying off with broader interest to plan a portage route across the dam from the southern or tidal river to what is known as Wakefield Pond where the Riverwalk has been built. This is the critical link in the proposed Blue Trail, connecting the Riverwalk area and Caleb's Dock with the lower, tidal reaches of the river and Point Judith Pond, aka Salt Pond, the Saugatucket's estuary. Of course, once out in Salt Pond, it is easy for kayakers and canoeists to paddle south to the beaches at Jerusalem, the fishing village at Galilee, and to explore Potter's Pond. And Peace Dale is easily reached on the river by paddling north from Wakefield. In fact, this stretch of the river can be very scenic. From the Peace Dale Palisades Mill north, the river is essentially private and accessible only by invitation. But we will be working on special events to allow members to see the river and Peace Dale Pond.

Chairs for Charity a Great Success by Robin Wildman

On a hot June afternoon the Downtown Wakefield Merchants hosted the first annual *Chairs For Charity* fundraising event. Those who attended this lively event were able to view and bid on 90 different chairs that children and adults decorated and entered into a contest, complete with exciting prizes. Chairs ranged from a brightly painted one that was shaped like a hot pepper, to an oddly decorated one called *Starry Night*, after Van Gogh's painting (complete with an ear laying on the seat of the chair!). As the auctioneer called for bids it became

clear that many chairs were highly desired and some were bought for well over \$100.00! Main Street Merchants and others generously donated great prizes for winners of different categories, such as most original, funniest, and best chair by a child. The outdoor river classroom was a recipient of the money raised by this first annual event. Dividing the profits equally between the Downtown Merchants Association and the river classroom, along with a generous \$1,000 donation from the Wakefield School P.T.O., we received \$3600 to put into our river classroom account. While this event took a tremendous amount of work, we are now several thousand dollars closer to building our outdoor classroom on the Saugatucket River!

Dorothy Devine Receives Rivers Council Award by Maureen Whalen

When I first moved to Peace Dale I met Dorothy Devine. Dorothy pretty much introduced me to my river, the Saugatucket. Eventually she enticed me to join the Coalition. On a beautiful spring day in Waterplace Park, I was pleased to assist in presenting the Rhode Island Rivers Council *River Guardian Award* to Dorothy. I am now a 'river person' myself because of Dorothy. I'd like to tell you about the impact of a single person, a volunteer on a river, and on a whole community.

Dorothy got involved in the Coalition after becoming active in a local community group, the Neighborhood Congress. Dorothy was drawn to the coalition, she said, because it took positive action and Dorothy had fallen in love with the river. She volunteered a little. And then she volunteered a lot. And then she became the volunteer Chairperson. Because she volunteered, the Coalition not only survived; it grew. She and Rich Youngken helped get the River's Council nomination for the Saugatucket and they lobbied at the State House for the river walkway, which is finally near completion. Dorothy took on school presentations, a newsletter, public awareness events, and became the spokesperson for the watershed. When I asked Dorothy how she got started in the Saugatucket Coalition, she said that it was just because where her property ended, the river began. She also remembered that she started asking questions: Can I swim in it? Why not? What happened?

Today the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition has office space. That had been Dorothy's dream: to have a space for education, for exhibits, and for community visibility. We have hired an executive director. And now, there are several of us struggling to do what Dorothy used to do alone. As much as Dorothy has loved the river itself, her favorite part of her river advocacy was meeting new people and introducing them to their river. Because she volunteered, today there are many other people taking up the cause of the Saugatucket River. I feel privileged to know someone who has made such a difference in our community, Dorothy Devine.

Watch for our Winter Newsletter Special Feature - An Interview with Charles Sweet done recently by Maureen Whalen

Sunday, October 9th Wakefield Tree Tour 12:30 – 2:30 PM
River Party: River Lodge on the River 3:00 – 5:00 PM

- Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition
Educating the community about the Saugatucket River and its watershed

PLEASE PLAN TO JOIN US

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