Our annual meeting held at the Manor House was a great success with over 130 people in attendance. The dinner was a “Thanksgiving primer” with turkey and various sides. Barbara Dyer presented a media show that highlighted many of the events over the past year. It put into perspective all the club has done over the past year. It has truly been a successful year!

The highest award presented to a member is the Appie of the Year. Nominated by their fellow members, it is awarded to the Worcester Chapter member who’s volunteer efforts over the past several years has made a significant, positive, contribution to the Club. This year the Appie of the Year was award to Fred Mezynski who has provided years of service as Biking Chair, Treasurer and most recently as Third Wednesday Chair. Every year Fred pulls together an excellent series of programs and speakers presented on every third Wednesday. These programs are pot luck. I encourage you to bring your favorite dish and congratulate Fred as he welcomes you with his big smile at the door. Also nominated by their fellow members were Bill Zahavi, Fred Mezynski, Deb Herlihy, Sharon Foster, Jen Eaton and Dave Cole.

One of Sharon’s last official duties as Chapter Chair was the awarding of the Chair Awards. This year she presented the award in recognition of their contributions to the club were Deb Herlihy and Deb Phaup. Finally, the volunteer of the month who won a free weekend at the Highland Center was Dawn Foster.

Roger Scholl, AMC Director of Leadership & Volunteer Relations, addressed the audience recognizing the Worcester Chapter contributions to the Maine Woods Initiative, providing opportunities for children and many other accomplishments that has caught the attention of Joy Street and other Chapters. For the size of our Chapter, we make an exceptional contribution to the success of the Appalachian Mountain Club. We should be proud of what we have accomplished and will continue making a great impact to the club.

The evening was capped off by a presentation by Jeanne Stawiecki, who climbed the highest peaks and ran marathons on all seven continents. Jean didn’t start her adventure until she quit smoking at the age of 40.
**2010 Fall Gathering**

Fun! To Get Some Business Done

Pam Landry, Fall Gathering Chair

Meeting under an overcast sky & anticipating the first snowfall, thirteen enthusiastic AMC members came together at Prindle Pond Conference Center “Hilltop” in early December to kick-off the planning of the 2010 Fall Gathering. Located in Charlton and surrounded by 500 wooded acres the Conference Center will be the site of the October 15-17 club wide Gathering hosted by the Worcester Chapter. Mark your calendars now!

Interested in becoming more involved with the chapter but not sure how? Thinking about becoming a member? Curious about what makes the AMC tick relative to conservation, recreation, and education? Wish to meet members from other chapters & develop new friendships? The Gathering is a great way for you to test the waters! Whether you spend a day or the weekend there will be many options from which to choose; committee meetings (conservation, young members, YCP, major excursions, membership, outdoor leadership and more), hikes, bikes, climbs, walks, or paddles with experienced leaders, guest presenters, live entertainment, yoga, and fun. There will be something for everyone!

With over two-hundred attendees anticipated, the success of the Gathering requires a cadre of dedicated volunteers working cooperatively as a team to coordinate the many facets of such an event. From registration to relaxation, signs to socializing, raffles to riding, tenting to trivia, publicity to paddling and dining to dancing, nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something to make this a quality event. Please consider sharing your skills and expertise by volunteering. As a spoke in the wheel of the volunteer team you will be eligible to be entered to win the 2010-2011 Home Made Cookie of the Month provided by Chapter VP Pat Lambert. How could anyone pass up that opportunity?

Please contact Fall Gathering Chair at naturetrax@gmail.com for more information on how you can be part of the team. Discover why some of the richest people in the world are not millionaires, they are volunteers!

**Troopers at Zealand Hut**

By Barbara Dyer

In an effort to promote kids in the outdoors to follow our mission of “No Child Left Inside”, this is an article that I’m sure other parents and scouts can relate to.

Recently, on December 12th, Troop 92 of Southboro headed for their grand winter adventure to Zealand Hut. We hiked the seven miles in on snowshoes on two feet of newly sparkled snow, and arrived in the dark after a strenuous hike with heavy packs for these boys ranging in age from 11 – 17. We had illnesses, injuries, blisters, exhaustion, equipment failure, hiking in the dark with very cold temperatures (12 degrees), but six hours later (nearly twice as long as expected) we arrived safely to the warmth of the hut with the propane light flickering from a distance that got us through the last mile. The boys made a delicious beef stew which added to the camaraderie of the trip, while the adults relaxed and watched the future Eagle scouts show their positive attitudes and leadership skills. As one of the leaders, it made the trip when I observed these boys in action prodding each other along, not complaining, and coming together as a team to work through our issues. It is something us adults learned on the trail too about teamwork, being prepared, and leadership. Hopefully these memories will be fondly remembered after we all healed from the adventure of our lifetimes. Special thanks to the Highland Center for loaning us the snowshoes and to Margaret our friendly caretaker. Our next adventure will be at Lonesome Lake hut in February.
According to the Appalachian Mountain Club’s Mission, Statement successful conservation depends on active engagement with the outdoors, the AMC encourages people to experience, learn about, and appreciate the natural world. The Maine Woods Initiative represents the most significant investment in conservation and recreation in the AMC’s 130-year history. My initial idea for this article was to write about the recent purchase of land in Maine. I wanted to share the news with the Worcester Chapter about how successful a group of dedicated volunteers can be and how they can make a difference. However when reading about the Maine Initiative and gathering my facts, I learned that not only is the Maine Initiative about conserving land but also about teaching the local children about the Maine Woods. Their goal is to provide at least three outdoor experiences during each child’s school career. This is a great idea and something we can do in Worcester County.

When someone learns how to enjoy the natural beauty of their area they are more likely to want to conserve the land and the nature that surrounds them. I have been lucky enough to be able to share my love of nature with my students through coaching cross-country and through hiking with them. I know by teaching them how to enjoy the beauty around them they are more likely to want to conserve that area. Conservation does not have to mean accruing new land or writing grants. One can conserve their nature preserves, state forests or wilderness area by doing trail work, clean up crews or teaching those around them about Leave No Trace.
Ankle Break….a story of near mountain tragedy and lessons learned

By Jen Eaton, Young Members (YM) Co-Chair

This past summer was our second July 4th weekend trip to the Adirondacks. With longer weekends, we sometimes venture farther for a change of scenery. Although our first ADK trip was perfect weather, 2009 came with lots of rain and much cooler temps. This was my first car camping trip with not one campfire. Needless to say, we are hardcore campers who know how to rig tarps to keep everyone dry and still have fun. And we had thought rain and zero mountaintop views would be the worst of it. On one of the hikes on Sunday’s up Mt. Pitchoff, Mark Nieber, our “YMer” who really isn’t of age anymore but in spirit is as youthful as they come, broke his ankle. Although I was leading another hike, I wanted to share our experience and all we had learned. Here’s my group interview of the experiences from those directly and indirectly involved and what we YMers learned.

Jen: “Mark, what the heck happened up there?”

Mark: “I simply slipped on a rock, twisted my ankle and fell. There was a light rain that day. I knew immediately that it was broken.”

Jen: “What were some of your immediate responses that we can publish?”

Mark: “Well, I thought I need to set this and take something for the pain.”

Jen: “Sounds like Wilderness First Aid came to mind immediately. What went well and anything you think should have been done differently?”

Mark: “Everyone on the hike worked as a team and responded calmly. Rangers responded quickly and got me off the trail fast. I was treated at the medical center quickly as well. I should have changed into dryer clothes.”

Jen: “I remember you being the only patient there when we picked you up. Any lessons learned?”

Mark: “It was hard to just let everyone else take care of me and not take charge. I knew what needed to be done right away but I was a little out of it. I sent my pack along with those who were going to get in cell range to call for help and I could have used things from it like a dry shirt. I might add a splint to my first aid pack. The rangers thought we ought to have had one.”

Jen: “How are you healing?”

Mark: “Well I had surgery and had pins put in. Doctors say I’ll need to have them removed to hike again.”

Jen: “That stinks, Mark. Take care of your ankle. Dave, you are a long time hiker and familiar with our group and the ADKs. What did you take away from this experience?”

Dave: “This was a good experience considering the circumstances. I learned a good deal from working with the rangers and my fellow hikers. It wasn’t fun, but I think I am better for it. I wished we had some gear to help with evacuation. But as with WFA, we did the best with what we had. I’m glad we were in Lake Placid as we had quick response from the rangers due to the Olympic training center and their focus on wilderness response. My understanding is this response doesn’t happen so quickly elsewhere.”

Jen: “Anything you would have done differently?”

Dave: “Well you can always say something here. I think we responded well and everyone stayed calm. I held back since I didn’t have current WFA certification and wasn’t sure about that part. I think we were quick to send a group to get help due to the weather conditions (cool, rainy) and in retrospect, could have taken more time. Maybe we could have kept more gear with the group that stayed behind with Mark. All in all, I think we all handled it well.”

Jen: “Thanks, Dave. Tim, you were the leader on this trip, right? What is your reaction?”

Tim: “Well, I think we splinted Mark’s leg really well. We should have kept Mark’s pack and used more gear. It was interesting trying to assist Mark down the trail. When the litter arrived, that made it a whole lot easier. Mark reacted better than most would in that situation.”

Jen: “Tim, any lessons learned?”

Tim: “I think I might add a splint to my pack. We could have used a bit more gear like extra shirts. We should’ve had SOAP notes but besides, everyone did a great job.”

Jen: “I recall, it was a pretty dreary day. Probably would’ve been hard to write notes in the rain. Thanks, Tim. John, you were a participant on this hike. What did you take away from this?”

John: “You never know when something is going to happen.
A sprain can still be walked on but not a broken bone. Everyone stepped up and did what was needed. We did a great job.”

Jen: “Anything you wish you had that you didn’t?”

John: “Maybe an ax. The stick we used to carry Mark was just too small. The rangers fixed that when they showed.”

Jen: “Andrea, you were one of the other participants who helped with the rescue then were relieved once some of the rangers came. What was this like for you?”

Andrea: “It went well, considering. The only thing we should have done differently was kept Mark’s pack and made him change his clothes. We sent his pack with Chelsea & Kate to call for help. We were lucky they got a signal as fast as they did as service is spotty in that area. Taking Mark down was slow and I felt myself starting to get cold despite having extra clothes on. I was afraid I’d get hypothermia and further compromise the situation.”

Jen: “Glad you didn’t. Anything to add?”

Andrea: “I’m just glad it wasn’t life-threatening like a compound fracture. It reminds me that anything can happen on the trail and we need to be prepared for a rescue at any time.”

Others who helped with the rescue but weren’t part of the interview were: Emerson, Chelsea, & Kate. Thanks to everyone who handled themselves on this trip. I’m glad for the outcome, which was to get everyone safe and back to camp. I learned of the accident upon return from a wet hike up Mt. Phelps. It was scary to learn of a friend stuck in hypothermic conditions with an injury. We’re all grateful for the rapid response of the rangers as chances are, big delays could have resulted in more dangerous outcomes. What impressed me was Mark’s upbeat attitude about it all. We finished the trip with a cookout, great conversation and feelings of relief and happiness. All we have left are deeper friendships, stories to tell and pictures to go with.

Well, Mark, keep healing. Hope to see you on the trail again soon.

Pat Lambert, Vice Chair

On the heels of the success of the winter 2008-2009 Explore Your Inner Winter Hiker series, the Worcester Chapter is once again offering it for the winter 2009-2010.

54 participants attended the November 5 workshop at the Northborough Historical Society. Charlie Arsenault, Hiking Chair; Steph Keimig, winter hike leader extraordinaire; and Pat Lambert, Vice Chair presented information on how to get ready for winter hiking, what to do when you’re on the trail, and what gear you need. If you were unable to attend the workshop, the presentation is posted to our Hiking page. Here is the link: http://www.amcworcester.org/AMC%20Documents/ExploreYourInnerWinterHiker2009.pdf

We offer 2 tracks in this series: easier to moderate and moderate to advanced. In each track, the hikes progress from shorter/less challenging hikes to longer/more challenging hikes. We know not all hikers are interested in scaling the New Hampshire 4000’ers in winter which is why we offer the easier to moderate track. Hikes in this track will take you to Wachusett Mountain, Mt. Watatic, and other state parks. These hikes will help to build your confidence in heading out on your own or with friends to explore local areas you’ve avoided once the trails have been covered with snow. If you are interested in scaling the 4000’ers, then the moderate to advanced track is for you. This track will also take you to Wachusett Mountain but will go on to Mt. Monadnock, Mt. Cardigan, the Hancocks and other 4000’ers in the White Mountains.

We’ve already had 2 hikes at Wachusett Mountain that were well attended. More hikes in both tracks are scheduled for January to March. Although preference to register for these hikes is given to the workshop attendees up to 2 weeks prior to the hike, non-workshop attendees can participate in these hikes on a space available basis. Contact the leader(s) of the hike you are interested in for more information on a particular hike.

If you have any questions about the series, please contact our Hiking Chair, Charlie Arsenault at cca100@verizon.net

Let the snow fall and the hiking continue!
AMC Traditions Continue

Steve Ciras with contributions from Bob Gilchrist

There are some long standing traditions of the Worcester Chapter of the AMC one of which is the annual Thanksgiving Hike. According to Bob Gilchrist, long standing Chapter member, the tradition was started in the late 70’s or early 80’s by Roy Johnson and his WPI Outing Club. Back in those days Bob dressed up like a maitre’d while others wore formal dining attire. Things have changed as current members don’t put up with such formalities but now only dress up like Gov Bradford in a pilgrim outfit.

Each year the event is held at Carter, Zealand or Lonesome Lake Hut, the only huts open in late November. Each individual is asked to bring a “larger pack” to leave room for pasta, pasta sauce, salads, dressing, eggs, cranberries, bacon, sausage, potatoes, cheese, squash, apples, pie crust, stuffing, beans, bread, wine, cranberry sauce, brown sugar, raisins, oatmeal, coffee, muffin mix, brownie mix, gravy mix, butter…the list continues….and of course the Turkey. This is in addition to full winter gear.

For the past several years, snow storms have been thrown in the mix. Two years ago, the largest storm of the season actually hit the group. This year the group started up the trail in rain and ended up facing a full blown snow storm. Winds at the high peaks were sustained at 100 mph. The group starts out on Friday morning and drag all the gear to the hut. The afternoon includes some short hikes and usually a Yahtzee tournament at night along with lots of laughs. Saturday is the big day when the bird is stuffed and thrown in the oven. The group then heads out for some longer hikes and can usually triangulate back to the hut or simply follow the smell of turkey cooking in the air. Saturday night is more games and laughter. Sunday morning is a clean-up and a hike back to reality.

The hike has become so popular that members of the Berkshire, New Hampshire, Southeast, Boston and Narragansett Chapters have been known to join in. It’s a perfect weekend that is bound to continue into the future. The only improvement that has been tossed around is to get a live turkey to help carry some of the food in.

Intro to Backpacking

On Saturday, May 2, 2009 the Worcester and Berkshire Chapters held a joint ‘Introduction to 3 Season Backpacking Workshop’ at the Oregon Sportsman’s Club in Chicopee, MA. Twelve participants attended an informative and fun day presented by Berkshire Chapter’s Christine Fogarty and Rob Robertson, and Worcester Chapter’s Gary Fitzgerald. Topics covered included gear and camping equipment selection and use, proper clothing and personal hygiene on the trail, trail food and cooking, trip planning, Leave No Trace principles, map and compass use, and safety and medical emergency concerns.

The workshop was followed by 3 well attended backpacking trips in May, June, and July, and plans for a fall backpack are in the works. All of the trips have been along the A.T., 2 in the southern Berkshires and one in the White Mountains. Participants included members from Boston, Narragansett, Worcester, and Berkshire chapters who eagerly pursued practicing their newly learned skills.

Judging by turnout, enthusiasm, and post trip responses, this was a highly successful event that is definitely worth repeating next year.
One more reason you never forget how to ride one.

Nearly everyone has taken their bicycle out on a there-and-back-again ride, or ridden around in a miles-long loop. But have you ever carried a few supplies with you and just kept riding? It is called cycle touring, and here's how you can get started.

As with any new outdoor activity, it is often helpful to gain some experience on an easier trip, such as an organized cycle tour where someone does the planning for you. Guided tours may include lodging, provide meals, or set up rest stops with snacks and drinks. The guides are experienced riders, and can help with mechanical problems or the dreaded tire puncture. Supported tours carry your belongings, allowing you to cycle without the extra weight, and often include “sag” wagon support, meaning someone with a vehicle gives you and your cycle a lift if needed. Self-supported tours may be guided, too, but you carry your own gear, and sag support is not provided. Self-guided tours give you experience following a route sheet provided by the tour organizer. Fixed-center tours allow for thorough exploration of an area during several day-long rides that start and end at your accommodation. Moving-on tours may cover a specific path or cross a particular region, with overnight stays at a different location each night. Overall, organized tours are a great way to gain experience and meet cyclists with similar interests. A potential down-side to guided tours is that the guides may be as new to the route as you are. Conversely, a guide who has led a tour over and over may love the route, but who wouldn't want to see someplace new?

Self-planning your tour lets you customize all the options and can significantly reduce costs. Be realistic about the daily mileage planned, leaving time for rest breaks, meals, and sightseeing along your route.

Regardless of the type of tour you choose, be sure to check out your cycle and gear ahead of time by taking at least one ride with your bike loaded exactly as it will be on your tour.

The websites for Adventure Cyclists (US) and Sustrans (UK) have long-distance cycle route information, and of course many routes exist in other countries. Multi-country regional routes, such as the North Sea Cycle Route, or the Danube Cycle Route, are popular. It is up to you whether or not to follow an established route. Your choices are limited only by where the roads or cycle paths can take you. Cyclists log their experiences from tours all over the planet on the Crazy Guy on a Bike website (also a great venue to exchange info with other cyclists). Authors Barbara Savage, Alastair Humphreys, and Rob Lilwall have each published their stories of inspiring multi-year cycle tours.

Cyclists from 8 to 80 years old have pedaled alongside me on self-supported tours. Younger kids, sitting behind their parents, participated too. There's room for you on the roads and cycle paths. Won't you join us?

Author Colleen McLaughlin
A special thanks to Sharon Foster for her hard work as chapter chair for the past 2 yrs.

Editor, Barbara Dyer. All newsletter submissions should be sent to barbaradyer@hotmail.com. We reserve the right to edit for length and content. All contributions are welcome. Spring deadline March 15.

Newsletter Design, Bob DesRosiers. Graphic designer/photographer. Questions/comments about design services or the newsletter to bob@1uniquestudio.com or visit my web site www.1uniquestudio.com Photo inlay by Bob DesRosiers.