Try Something New – I did!

On Sunday, May 17, I completed my first triathlon. It all started when I decided to add running to my routine to cross-train for biking. I was looking for something to mix it up and challenge myself. I never considered myself a runner but once I started doing it I actually enjoyed it. Then my competitive side emerged and I decided it would be fun to try a 5K. I signed up for that 5K but before I could run it a friend convinced me to do a duathlon (running and biking). It was so much fun that I decided I wanted to do more races. I may have stuck with duathlons but there are not that many so I determined that a triathlon was the way to go. This meant I had to swim! So, 3 weeks ago I got into the pool and did laps for the first time in 20 years because I wanted to try something new.

Have you always wanted to try something new, or push yourself to new limits? Are you a day-hiker who always dreamed of that overnight under the stars far from any roads, or perhaps you have spied those kayakers out on the pond and said to yourself “That looks like fun, maybe I should try it”? Perhaps you are one of our members who look at the activities listings every month in Outdoors (or on the web) and say to yourself “I should participate one of these days”.

Well, don’t wait any longer! This is the perfect place to get started or take that next step. Our area and your chapter offers a wide range of areas to explore and activities to join; from local hikes in the park to overnight trips in the White Mountains and beyond, plenty of options for cycling from easy bike path rides to our faster Thursday Night Rides, paddling and more. If you are new to an activity check out our intro level workshops and activities, if you are experienced and want to take that next step and share your favorite places check out our leadership training and consider becoming a leader.

So, I did that 5K run, but I first I had to swim and bike a bit before lacing up my sneakers and hitting the road for those last couple of miles. It was fun and I can’t wait to do it again. What’s next on your list?

Sharon
Sharon_Foster2@yahoo.com
Chapter Youth Program Hike at Moore State Park
by Deb Phaup

On a windy, drizzly Thursday in April, the 23rd to be exact, the Worcester Chapter Youth Program held its first event of the year with the Big Brothers Big Sisters of MetroWest and Central Mass organization (BBBS). This is the third such event with the agency in the past year.

The weather forecast changed, well, like the weather, as the date approached, and it was questionable whether it would rain or shine. Lillyanna Peniza of BBBS and I agreed that after weeks of planning, the hike would take place unless there was either a danger to the participants, or if no one showed up! A little water never hurt anyone, right?

As the meeting time of 1:30 pm approached, the few sprinkles proved not to be an issue, as the cars filed into the parking lot of Moore State Park in Paxton. I was anxious to start my first-ever hike lead with co-leaders Bruce Blais, Elaine Cibelli, Tom Dunne, and Michele Simoneau. I was a little nervous thinking “what if the kids are bored or there’s nothing to talk about?” Ha! My worries were soon proven to be completely unfounded.

Lillyanna and Gail Melgren, match specialists for BBBS, and two 22 year old Big Sisters who volunteered to help out arrived with 12 kids from their waitlist. The boys and girls varied in age from a petite 6-year old girl to a husky 17 year old boy. All of the kids are currently being evaluated to help the matching process of pairing them with a “Big.” Outings such as this are valuable to the agency in assessing the kids’ personalities and behaviors with adults and other kids.

We started out at the parking lot and walked down the paved service road, coming to Eames Pond. The kids were excitedly searching the water for any frogs, fish or other wildlife, but a lonely duck was our only sighting. Being kids, they threw a few sticks and rocks in the water, and were happy to move on. As we came upon a supply shed, the imaginations and questions were flying. “Does someone live in there?” “How do they go to the bathroom if there’s no water or electricity?” “Can wild animals get in there?” You couldn’t help but join in the fantasy.

As we descended the trail and back towards the pond, the conversation never stopped. The kids were curious about everything, even though the weather was windy and cool, the wildlife was all in hiding, and nothing was really in bloom yet (this park is said to be gorgeous later in spring with an abundance of mountain laurel, rhododendron bushes, and many perennial flowers all in bloom). The bigger kids were very helpful and even protective of the younger kids, often putting an arm around a younger one, or holding their hands and helping them across some muddy spots. It was very touching, since these kids had never seen each other before. As we excitedly chatted and hiked down the backside of Staircase Loop, I, and the 5 boys that were conversing with me got ahead of the rest of the group. We heeded their shouts to wait up and I said, “Oh-oh, I’m not being a very good leader by getting ahead of the rest of the group.” An adorable 8 year old boy looked into my eyes with such caring and said, “I think you’re a GREAT leader. That’s a very pretty necklace you’re wearing too.” How cute was that! I got a bit choked up, I have to admit.

We stopped on the covered bridge for another break and gave the kids a chance to enjoy the view of the waterfall below it. The next loop ended at the Old Sawmill which had been there since the mid 1700’s. We were able to get pretty close to the edge of the Artist Overlook for more questions and imaginative conversation. We circled back up by another waterfall and then made our way back through the Chestnut Research Orchard to bring us back to the parking lot.

(continued on pg3)
Here, BBBS leaders distributed snacks, while I finally had a chance to give out our Worcester Chapter Youth Program water bottles. They were a big hit, some kids asking for 2 (sorry, 1 per customer). Some sat on the grass, resting, talking or goofing around, while others played with Bruce and his frisbee on the grassy field. The kids were genuinely disappointed to leave. The afternoon proved to be a great time for everyone, with no Nintendo DS, Nickelodeon, texting, or IM’ing. And without much accept the outdoors surrounding them, there wasn’t a boring moment to be had. Just like when we were kids….

If you’d like to get involved with the Chapter Youth Program, please contact Deb Phaup at dphaup@verizon.net. We need more leaders, ideas, suggestions and agencies to work with. Help us get more kids outdoors!

And the winners are...

It was our 1st Annual Leader Palooza, at the Northborough Historical Society and the turnout was pretty impressive. We had approx., 40+ participants and used this opportunity to remind folks what it means to be a volunteer Leader for the AMC and how much we appreciate your efforts sharing your love of the outdoors with others.

We spent some time early in the evening reviewing leadership guidelines and introduced our new Leadership Review Process (which can be found on our website under Leadership/Forms/Guides) and split up into groups for some brainstorming sessions on issues such as; Trip Planning, Handling Emergency Situations, and More Introductory Activities. Which the Executive Committee will review feedback and report results.

But, it was not all business! We also played “Wah”...? and a few Committee Chairs (Pat Lambert, Charlie Arsenault, and Steve Ciras) participated in a skit on “The Importance of Remembering to bring your Volunteer Release Form with you when leading an AMC sponsored activity!”

The highlight of the evening was having an opportunity to reward our active volunteer Leaders with chapter poly-propylene T-shirts in royal blue, bearing the AMC logo and proudly displaying Worcester Chapter Leader beneath it! Now, how can you get one of these fine T-shirts you ask? Well, I’ll tell you... you have to be a qualified Worcester Chapter Leader and attend our next Leader Palooza event!

But, that’s not all! You know how we’re always bugging you to send your volunteer release forms in? Well, there’s a very good reason for this! First, we keep track of all activities that are led by our leaders and this information is kept by Joy Street and second and most importantly we want to recognize you for your contributions and time! This year’s recipients received their own poly-propylene long sleeve T in bright yellow bearing the AMC logo with Worcester Chapter Leader below.

So, when you see the following Leaders; please congratulate them for leading so many activities for the Worcester Chapter and remember to send me your signed volunteer release forms as you may be next year’s recipient!

And the winners are...

Most Paddle trips (tied); Pat Rheaumee, Jerry Burke, Elaine Cibelli and David Miller
Most Ski trips; Michele Simoneau
Most Bike trips (tied); Fred Mezynski, Paul Gross and Sharon Foster
Most Hike trips (tied); Paul Glazebrook and Steve Ciras
Most Trips Overall 3rd place; John Gau (11)
Most Trips Overall 2nd place; Jen Eaton (12)
Most Trips Overall 1st place; Pat Lamber (18)

By Deb Herlihy, Leadership Chair
Passion does not arrive on video tape or on a CD. Passion is personal. Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young. It travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism and the environment itself, we must also save an important indicator species, the child in nature.

This statement comes from the book “Last Child in the Woods”. By Richard Louv, As an AMC family member, I often think about how I can raise our children with backwoods ethics and share the beauty of the natural world. Opportunities to explore the great outdoors are abundant, especially if you use the AMC as your guide. Recently, my kids and I joined forces with the AMC NH Chapter Families Group, a long established organization of families that through the years have created mountain memories together. Our most recent adventure included a May overnight backpack to Mizpah Hut with about 40 participants of various ages 8+. Despite scrapes, bruises, complaints, dehydration of which my kids had all but yes survived, everyone had a great time. The parents especially enjoy the adult camaraderie while the children have their independence and have fun with the many others who also share their same outdoor interests. These are some of the many mountain memories we shared together that will always be cherished. Some ways to get outdoors with your kids are through the outdoors programs offered by the AMC, take national park or state park vacations, take a walk on the wild side, do trail work together, go camping, join the scouts, get involved and simply lead by example and they will likely follow you to the great outdoors. Here’s wishing your families a summer of many happy trails together!

Cartridge World Milford’s Earth Day E-Waste Collection Fundraiser

On April 18th, Earth Day, the Worcester Chapter partnered with local business owners to run the first E-Waste collection at Milford’s Fino Field. In addition, the AMC provided support and advice on stewardship to those working and using the Milford Upper Charles Trail. Over $1,400 was raised at this event and will be used by the Friends of the Milford Upper Charles Trail for trial maintenance and development.

Deb Herlihy, Leadership Chair Worcester Chapter AMC

amcworcester.org
Explore Your Inner Winter Hiker – Wrap-up

The inaugural winter hiking series was a success! 34 participants attended the November workshop and we had 23 on the wait list. Of the workshop attendees, 15 went on at least one of the 13 hikes held as part of this series. 14 hikes were scheduled but we had to cancel one at Wachusett Meadow that had been scheduled for Dec. 13 – 2 days after the ice storm that wreaked havoc in central/northern Massachusetts. 17 hike leaders helped our participants learn best practices to complete winter hikes safely and comfortably.

We offered 2 tracks in this series: easier to moderate (Callahan State Park to Mt. Monadnock), moderate to advanced (Mt. Watatic to the Osceolas). In each track, the hikes progressed from shorter/less challenging hikes to longer/more challenging hikes.

The individuals with the highest participation rate included:

Easier to Moderate Track:
  • Bill Zahavi (6 of 6)
  • Dave Sensenig (5 of 6, plus Intro. to Snowshoeing hike at Broadmoor Sanctuary)
  • Mark Sensenig (5 of 6, plus Intro. to Snowshoeing hike at Broadmoor Sanctuary)

Moderate to Advanced Track:
  • Peter Cheng (5 of 6, plus Intro. to Snowshoeing hike at Broadmoor Sanctuary and 1 easier to moderate track hike)
  • Paul O’Brien (5 of 6)
  • Bob Thompson (5 of 6, plus Intro. to Snowshoeing hike at Broadmoor Sanctuary)

Congratulations to Bill, Dave, Mark, Peter, Paul and Bob!

Save the date! Thursday, November 5 we will have the 2010 winter hiking workshop at the Northborough Historical Society. Check our website, www.amcworcester.org, this fall for details.

Intro. to 3-Season Hiking Series 2009

This series, a joint venture with the Berkshire Chapter, is designed to help get our members who are either new to hiking or who haven’t hiked in a long time out on the trails. Earlier in the season, workshops were held in Northborough and Hadley, with 30 attendees in total, to review Hiking Basics 101. Unable to attend either workshop? The presentation we used is available on the Hiking page at http://www.amcworcester.org/hiking.htm.

We offer 2 tracks of hikes: easier to moderate (for those who may not be ready for NH 4000’ers), moderate to advanced (for those who are itching to start bagging the 4000’ers). In each track, the hikes progress from shorter/less challenging hikes to longer/more challenging hikes. Although preference for the hikes is given to workshop participants up to 1 week prior to a scheduled hike, non-workshop participants are welcomed on these hikes on a space available basis.

If you are interested in checking out the hikes in this series, look for Intro. to 3-Season Hiking in the trip descriptions under both the Worcester and Berkshire Chapter listings.

If you have any questions regarding this series, please contact Pat Lambert at plambert19@yahoo.com.
Letter to the Editor  By Claude Guerlain

Thank you Executive Committee for selecting me Volunteer of the Month in January. To the rest of our membership, I want to say that, although I appreciate this recognition, the wide variety of volunteerism I do for the chapter brings me countless rewards. I would do it regardless, and recommend anyone get involved in any way that works for you, your family and your lifestyle. My first AMC volunteer effort was at an Adopt-a-Park clean-up run by Conservation Chair Mary MacDonald. I will never forget the joy of hearing a child volunteer from the city of Worcester say, “Look! The birds are coming back to our pond!” A young girl in hip waders, diligently raking plastic bags out of the marsh grass, inspired me to work harder.

I kept that image in mind when I decided to become our club’s liaison to the Organization for the Assabet River, bringing AMC volunteers to their annual river cleanups, and to their planning meetings to determine the direction of future conservation efforts for the Assabet.

My next step towards helping the AMC came when I lamented to fellow member Cibelli Cybulski that too many hikes were in the White Mountains, and not enough were local. As Northborough Trails Committee Chair Charles Bradley so succinctly put it, “People don’t want to drive an hour to walk and hour. They just want to walk.” Elaine told me what she’s told countless others before, “Become a leader yourself. Then you can decide where the hikes are done.” So I did. I took both Leadership Training and Wilderness First Aid, two excellent programs offered by Worcester Chapter. Then I attended Hiking Chair Pat Lambert’s Winter Hiking Workshop to learn more about what I would need to know to make me a better hike leader. Now I lead local snowshoe hikes on the 26 miles of trails in my hometown. And at the same time minimize my carbon footprint.

The most rewarding aspect of these activities, and the volunteering I’ve done at shows and events, is the opportunity to meet new and interesting people. This is especially true on the hikes I’ve led. The easy pace, free of outside distractions, allows for a free-flowing exchange of ideas amongst similarly minded people, that doesn’t happen often or as easily in other social settings.

Thanks again for the recognition, but more so for the opportunity to grow into a better, happier person by giving of myself. I didn’t know I would receive so much more in return.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTH!
Dec - David Brainard  Jan - Claude Guerlain  Feb - Dan Bolton  Mar - Mike Jones  Apr - Tom Brown  May - Paul Glazebrook

AMC Photo 2010 Calendar Contest

Have a favorite picture of a Worcester Chapter event? Perhaps it can end up on our new calendar! We have had request for an old fashion, non web based calendar that you can actually hang on the wall. We have decided to try it out and include Worcester Chapter events that happen on a regular basis like the Spring Picnic, 3rd Wednesdays, Annual Meeting and other annual events.

To make this more interesting we decided to have a photo contest. The best photos will appear in the calendar. The pictures should be AMC or outdoors related. We think the judges will favor those directly related to Worcester Chapter events. For example, a nice picture of the Spring Picnic has a better chance of being chosen for the month of May over a picture of my hiking gear.

Contact Steve Ciras (worcamchiking@yahoo.com) or check the Worcester Chapter website for more details.
First Annual YM Summit By Jen Eaton, YM Chair

Some history: Young Members (YM) subcommittees are an important part of the AMC. New Young Members of today become tomorrow’s AMC Executive Leaders. However, YM groups struggle club-wide. Many individuals in their 20s and 30s are focused on life changes of various sorts; continuing education for advanced degrees, starting careers, settling down, and starting families. Few have time to put in extra efforts outside of these major accomplishments to do the necessary behind the scenes work to develop, maintain, and grow YM.

This year, YM Chairs and leaders from various chapters connected at this year’s Annual Meeting at the first forum. Some of us were drawn by the speaker and others hoping to connect with other YM Chairs. Many YM chairs and interested parties began to brainstorm best practices and gain ideas to lure new members and improve their club. The meeting was to last an hour but for many of us, we made a day of it. One of the ideas that concluded our day was to have an Interchapter YM Gathering.

YM Summit: April 24th, YM Chairs, to-be chairs, or others very active and necessary behind-the-scene leaders, drove to the Berkshires for what is now called, AMC’s YM Summit. Some drove 7 hours from Maine, others 4 hours from NH and Boston. Worcester and Berkshire chapters were also in attendance. This event was mainly organized by Wendy Barbour, Berkshires YM Co-Chair; myself, Jen Eaton (Worcester YM Chair); with support by Ross Garofalo and Gina Adams YM Chairs from NH and Boston respectively.

We had a total of 10, including Tim Smith Worcester’s YM Hiking Chair and active year round leaders. We were regretful to not have representation from more chapters, especially since the location was chosen with the masses in mind. We kept expenses low for AMC by sharing meal organizing and preparation and cleanup. We easily completed a collaborative agenda throughout the weekend but in the spirit of AMC, connected with each other on a hike during summer weather of sunshine and heat.

The conclusion: We all learned new ideas to keep the club going, enhanced ways to collaborate via the internet, connected on interchapter events (stay tuned!), and committed to a second YM Summit hopefully at Cardigan Lodge next Spring. We also discussed trying to make more of a presence at AMC events like the Annual Meeting. Many of us left feeling rejuvenated with new ideas and grateful to connect with others with like issues. Hopefully next year leads to a bigger turnout and stronger YM groups in all AMC chapters. Now….back to the trails….why we do this in the first place.

This year’s Spring Picnic went off well despite uncooperative weather and a few snafu’s. Held this year at Buffumville Lake Park in Charlton, MA the event was well attended by approx., 60 members, their family and friends bearing home made goodies and dishes to share with grilled burgers and dogs. In addition to a grand afternoon hike, bike rides, paddling, geocaching and games; this year included a kids fishing tournament and Bill Zahavi’s adorable grand-daughter went home with some new fishing gear that she had won. Kayaks were also generously provided by New England Backpacker. In addition, door prizes included two backpacks from LL Bean, two backpacking stoves from Joy Street AMC, a $25 gift certificate from Landry’s Bike Shop, a fannie pack from NE Backpacker and two AMC books Women on High : Pioneers of Mountaineering by Rebecca A. Brown. Thanks to everyone who helped make this a fun event!
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