

**Town of Huntington Conservation Board
Huntington Trail Guide
2009 Education Award**

The Huntington Conservation Board has long been involved with the Town's parks and trails system. A Park Stewardship Program was established several years ago which promotes the volunteer involvement of concerned local citizens and groups. Its purpose is to assist the Department of Parks and Recreation to assure the protection, preservation, and safe use of parkland. These Town Board appointed volunteers serve as the "eyes, ears, and mouths" of our parks. The program was conceived and is administered by the Conservation Board and has grown over the years in both scope and size. There are currently about 250 stewards for the Town's 150 active and passive parks. For some years, trails guides for many of the actively hiked parks have been requested. We have tried to fulfill these requests, but for many reasons were unsuccessful.

This summer, Town Councilman Stuart Besen took up the cause and provided the impetus for the creation of the Huntington Trail Guide, featuring twenty of the Town's parks. The Guide contains information detailing park location, parking information, trail length, park amenities and educational opportunities, maps and photographs, historical facts, information about the park that the trail is located in, and some of the flora and fauna.

Key to completion of the Guide was the work of two summer interns, Elana Israel and David Kaufman, who were assigned by Councilman Besen and Supervisor Frank Petrone to the Dept. of Planning and Environment. They worked under the direction of Margo Myles, Coordinator of Open Space Conservation and Liaison to the Conservation Board, and Aidan Mallamo, GIS Supervisor.

Recognizing that trails must support multiple recreational purposes, including hiking, jogging, bicycling, horseback riding, cross country skiing, as well as educational and interpretive pursuits, the Town Board appointed a Huntington Greenway Trail Citizens Advisory Committee. This group, with the Conservation Board, provided suggestions and technical review. Throughout the summer, the student interns worked, walking the trails using GIS equipment, taking notes on park needs, and documenting everything with photographs. They researched the history of the parks from Planning Department and Conservation Board files. By the end of the summer, the Guide was largely done. Copies were distributed at two fall festivals. A printing was done by a local newspaper, the Times of Huntington, with the Guide being distributed to 10,000 of their subscribers. The Conservation Board had collected funds for a trail guide from a March for Parks, which is providing additional funding. The guide is available on the Town's website www.town.huntington.ny.us.

At this fall's Park Stewardship Meeting, the Trail Guide was distributed to delighted park stewards. What is next? With this excellent start, it is hoped that next summer more trails will be documented with another guide to be developed.

There is a big message here for Conservation Boards. It is important to use interested groups, find a sponsor, assist Town staff in any way possible, employ the talents of interested, enthusiastic students when and if they become available. But most of all, be tenacious and never give up on a project.

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