
Adams woman gets lost

Several depts. called in to search woods/A5



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Working toward a connection

NYC natives clear the way

Kids gain experiences on MM trail

By Phil Demers
North Adams Transcript

FLORIDA — Some city kids got to test their grips on weed whackers and loppers Tuesday morning while taking part in a program to enhance the Mahican-Mohawk Trail.

The group of 10, plus instructors, were among the first to hike a newly-connected segment of the trail that, thanks in part to their efforts, will open to the public later this summer.

“When you make a trail, you want to make it sustainable,” Emily Wells, one of the group leaders, called out during early instructions.

The day would see the young New York City natives cover five miles of ground and clear roughly half a mile of trail, lurching midway atop Spruce Hill.

Matthew Scholl, director of the Manice Education Center (MEC) on Savoy Road and charged with running the local program, said the trail represents a more accessible route for hikers, allowing one to take off from North Adams and travel straight through to the Mohawk Trail State Forest and Savoy Mountain State Forest.

“The dream was to connect the trail,” Scholl said. “... It’s a process of going through and making sure sections are groomed, making them highly accessible and usable to the public. We’ve gotten to do that while putting kids out in the community in a green way.”

The project progressed over a decade of collaboration between MEC through their Leadership Training Corps program and the Student Conservation Association in Hawley.

“It’s a great opportunity to take time figuring out what you want to do later in life while being able to do great things, like teach environmental education and trail works,” Wells — originally from Georgia — said.

MEC’s presence in the Berkshires dates back to 1981 as the flagship program for Christodora Inc., a training and environmental education company focused on inner-city youths. Christodora has operated in this capacity since the 1800s.

Tuesday’s participants were part of a “special select team” of students. Many



A group from a collaboration between the Manice Education Center’s Leadership Training Corps and the Student Conservation Association in Hawley make their way into the woods at the Busby Trailhead to work on clearing a trail in the Savoy Mountain State Forest in Florida on Tuesday morning. Right, Emily Wells instructs students on how to use a piece of equipment for clearing the trail.



Photos by Gillian Jones/
North Adams Transcript



Gillian Jones/North Adams Transcript

Students walk into the woods at the Busby Trailhead to work on clearing a trail in the Savoy Mountain State Forest in Florida on Tuesday morning.

Project is part of larger plan to link

TRAIL from A1

have been to the Berkshires several times over the past few summers.

Matthew Gonzalez, a Bronx native and alumni of the program who visited throughout middle school, had returned Tuesday for his second year teaching.

"I learn a lot about myself every time I come here,"

Gonzalez said. "When I first graduated, I thought that bus ride back home would be my last. But I had to come back. I like this kind of work."

The trail project itself is part of a larger initiative to connect a 100-mile walking trail between the Hudson and Connecticut rivers following the Mohawk Trail. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation

and Recreation sponsors the project, and the Hoosic River Watershed Association has played an integral part, among other Western Massachusetts environmental organizations.

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