

# 2019 RIVER WALK HIGHLIGHTS

River Walk depends upon local youth for its trail maintenance. Onsite education is key to our success.

For the past seven years, River Walk has relied on local Greenagers to serve as community caretakers. Onsite training gives our interns the skills they need to implement trail and ecological improvements. (Photo: Greenagers intern Jesse Blumenthal learned valuable skills while rebuilding our Main Street stairway with trail designer and contractor Peter Jensen.)



River Walk interns are encouraged to tailor their experiences to their special interests.

Olivia Conforti took on the role of River Walk's Project Native Intern. She is eager to learn about the native plants, birds, and pollinators integral to River Walk. She shares her thoughts through blogs on the River Walk website. (Photo: Olivia learns to transplant *Uvularia grandiflora*, a large-flowered bellwort, and works with Heather Cupo, River Walk's horticulturist, to design our newly installed arboretum signage.)



Community educational programs foster the understanding of our natural environment and provide moments of wonder and discovery.

This year's programs for kids and their families helped us to connect with families and learn about the ways they enjoy River Walk. (Photo by Juan Sanabria: We've known for years about turtles hatching on River Walk. Jonah and Arlie Sanabria of Egremont and Brooklyn caught them in the act!)



The beauty of River Walk inspires personal connections to the Housatonic River.

River Walk hosted *Heartflow*, a community celebration of the Housatonic River. The event included poets, musicians, artists, and speakers. Fifty participants joined in the Heartflow arts walk and water ceremony which focused on bringing mindfulness to our need for clean and flowing rivers. It was inspirational. (Photo: Artist JoAnne Spies performed Native American river songs inspired by connections to the Housatonic River.)



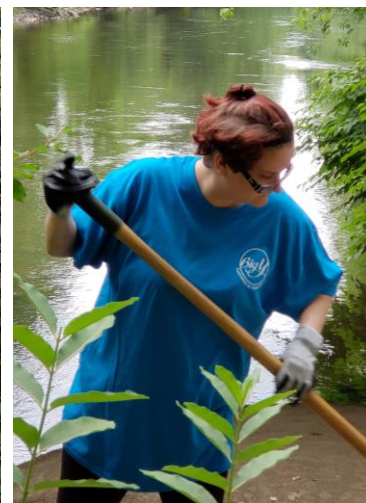
Community Volunteers learn valuable methods for sustaining our native habitat.

Each year, River Walk provides educational hands-on workshops. This year's learning focused on native pollinators, riparian trees, and local and migrating birds. As we learn, we work together to bring improvements to River Walk's plant and wildlife habitats. (Photo: At the Save our Tree Workshop, Tom Ingersoll led hardworking community volunteers to improve soil conditions crucial to our red oak's survival.)



Local Businesses find meaningful ways to engage in community stewardship.

In 2019 we hosted volunteers from Berkshire Bank and Big Y. These incredible business teams help us to accomplish our larger projects. (Photo: Big Y volunteers mulched our nature footpath to enhance the riverbank soil and prevent erosion and compaction. Local tree mulch was donated by Sweet Tree Company.)



# RIVER WALK 2019 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

River Walk is a riverside sanctuary built on 30+ years of community effort. We work to sustain our ongoing habitat rehabilitation and maintain a state-of-the-art trail system in order to protect river health and provide community access to the beautiful Housatonic River. Your support is essential to this ongoing work.

Together we:

- Supported five paid interns and Trail Master Elia Del Molino as they worked over 310 hours to maintain the trail. Through onsite training and other educational experiences, our interns gain valuable skills and develop a strong sense of their own capabilities.
- Engaged 65 local youth in outdoor kinetic learning programs including field training for Greenagers volunteers and interns as well as students from Monument Valley Middle School, Mount Everett Middle School, and Prospect Hill Academy Charter School.
- Welcomed 90 student volunteers as they contributed 285 volunteer hours for trail maintenance and river clean up in collaboration with Greenagers and Housatonic Valley Association.
- Helped over 225 community participants of all ages learn about the environment through Guided May E-Bird Walks, Arbor Day Tree Identification Challenge, Kids Story Trail programs, Heartflow (a summer solstice river celebration), a Guided Tree Walk, and Native Pollinator Programs.
- 45 community volunteers contributed 333 work hours to help manage and improve 0.5 mile of recreational river access. With this help, trails were well-kept and safe, and all trail elements (trail bed, cribbing, fencing, handrails, and signage) were impeccably maintained.
- Continued the ongoing restoration of 2.63 acres of riverfront with plantings of native perennials, trees, and shrubs, while also controlling exotic invasive plants and poison ivy with the guidance of our long-term horticulturalist Heather Cupo.
- Learned and worked together to safeguard the future health of our iconic Red Oak at a hand's-on workshop led by Land Care specialist Tom Ingersoll.
- Rebuilt our Main Street entrance stairway and repainted and repaired our upstream handrail system.
- Installed 22 horticultural signs, creating a downstream arboretum with the display of common and scientific tree names.
- Welcomed over 12,000 visitors to this community-built riverside sanctuary to connect with nature and learn about River Walk's 30 years of ecological restoration as well as our many historic connections.

