

The Friends of Goodwin Forest began as an idea in the late fall of 2009 and became official in 2010. With the guidance of Steve Broderick, CFPA agreed to be our fiscal sponsor so we could begin fundraising to improve, enhance, and make people aware of the Conservation Center.

Some of the key improvements the Friends have made over the past 15 years:

### **The Center**

We advocated for the renovation of the Center's exterior, replaced the bulkhead (the state was just going to seal off), created an historical museum in the main room of the house, added books to the library. Established the Little Free Library.

In 2011, with the help of a UCONN landscaping class, we developed a three-part plan to redesign the accessibility to the Center and create a vision for the future. The first two steps were accomplished: creating a welcoming and less confusing entrance to the Center, building a trailhead directly across the street and adding a crosswalk for safety. The third step would be building a new educational facility to the southeast of the pavilion near the pond. The trail crew also installed a universal access path to the wheelchair ramps of the house and museum.

### **Trails**

Friends of Goodwin sought and received two grants from external organizations totaling \$2300 for trail improvement projects. Using these funds, the trails crews were able to purchase materials and equipment to help them maintain and upgrade trails, add over four miles of new trails, create kiosks at key points and install signage to improve navigation. Visitors have commented that the Goodwin Forest has some of the best trails systems in the state. We also created a link from the Forest Discovery trail to the Airline trail and included a raised walkway and a platform that can be used for wetland lectures.

### **Gardens**

Volunteers expanded the garden from east to west and created the children's discovery trail. They enlarged the propagation area and held native plant sales to raise funds. We received multiple grants from the Master Gardener Association and formed a partnership with the Native Plant Trust (formerly Garden in the Woods) to create and educate the public about native wildflower gardens. We offered many garden themed

programs, guided tours, trained master gardener interns, and provided outreach opportunities for multiple civic organizations and schools.

### **Online presence**

We established a website and engaged with social media, enabling the Friends to promote the Goodwin Center and provide the public with easily accessible information about the Center, forest activities, and other events.

### **Master Naturalist Program**

The master naturalist program began in 2013 under the guidance of naturalist, Juan Sanchez. It has grown in popularity and is recommended by the state to their seasonal hires. It began as a two-part program that has evolved into one year-long course. Master naturalist graduates fulfilled their volunteer hours offering numerous programs across the state and have become involved in many citizen science projects.

### **Trail Run**

The Goodwin Forest Trail run began in 2014 and has grown to near-capacity in the ten years it has been held. The event was initiated to bring more awareness to the trail system at the Goodwin Forest and brought people from all over the world to participate. It has also raised a considerable amount of funds to help with the Friends' mission.

### **Education**

The Friends sponsored many experts representing diverse topics. They also hired the seasonal naturalist to work through the winter to keep them employed as well as to teach winter naturalist topics. We covered extra expenses for school trips and supplies and had many volunteers who taught classes and helped with events.

### **Volunteers**

Friends of Goodwin were able to recruit and retain talented individuals as well as organize projects for volunteer groups to create the trails, gardens and improve the Conservation Center. Many of these volunteers logged over 100 hours per year.