

EHLT NEWS

Congratulations to Kelsey Humble (Hale-Ray Class of 2008), winner of the Anita Ballek EHLT Scholarship. The award is for students who have demonstrated civic responsibility and wish to pursue a career in the environmental sciences. Kelsey will be attending Murray State University in Kentucky this Fall.

EHLT would also like to congratulate the winners of this year's calendar art contest:

Adults: Laurie Gelston Alt, Carolyn Bavedas and Jane Mazzotta.

Students: Emily McDougal, Carolyn Cianciolo, Bethany Powell, Trevor Dominy, Vinnie Garofalo, Brooke Stanley and Julian Ventres.

Thanks to all who submitted the over 100 entries this year. Look in the upcoming 2009 EHLT Calendar to see all the submissions and the winning art!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, September 6, 7pm **Star Gazing** with Bob Ballek. Come learn about the stars and see Mars, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus and other galactic wonders through the telescope. Held at Ballek's Garden Center, Maple Street.

Saturday, September 13, 9am **Gillette Castle Walk**. Tour the grounds of the historic Gillette Castle with EHLT Board Member Don Goss. Don was formally with CT DEP and oversaw the operation of the Castle. Meet in the Castle parking lot.

On-going: **Stewardship Saturdays**. Come help maintain EHLT properties and easements. Great way to help out EHLT and learn about our East Haddam preserves. The stewardship team meets each second Saturday at selected preserves. Watch your email for announcements or contact EHLT President Rob Smith for details (873-2189)

Please help support the Land Trust!

EHLT's work is entirely supported by the donations of our members. If you haven't renewed your membership, or you would like to volunteer, then go to our updated web site to find out more:

www.ehlt.org/membership.htm



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EAST HADDAM LAND TRUST *NEWSLETTER*



Summer 2008



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PUBLIC ACT 490 COULD SAVE YOU MONEY

Are you paying too much in property tax? If you own a piece of property that is for farming, forest land or other open space use then the answer could be yes! Public Act 490 was enacted by the legislature in 1963 to ensure that property taxes on open lands be assessed on the “use” value, rather than the market value. This allows owners of undeveloped parcels of land to continue to maintain these parcels as open space and to not be pressured to subdivide or sell these lands due to the higher property tax rates of non-open space properties.

How do you qualify for a lower tax rate? The first thing you need to do is contact the town assessor and apply for the 490 abatement credit, or download the forms from the town website (easthaddam.org/town_forms.htm). The size of your property and its current use will be key in

determining your eligibility. There is a requirement that once property is placed under 490, it will stay undeveloped for at least ten years or tax penalties will be incurred. East Haddam does not set a minimum amount of land needed for farmland or open space. Any property acreage outside of a building lot on a developed property can be designated as open space. If you own forest land (25 acres or more), you must have your land designated as forest land through the Forestry Division of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection using the services of a private certified forester. Once you have this designation, you then go to your assessor and fill out an application. All applications for 490 must be returned between **September 1** and **October 31**.

Want to learn more about PA490? Contact the East Haddam assessor's office (860-873-5024) with questions of how to reduce your property taxes and save open space.

THE EHLT WEBSITE: KEEPING MEMBERS IN TOUCH

Over the past 3 months, we have revamped our web site at www.ehlt.org. Most of the content is new since last winter, including pages for Preserving Your Land; a page with numerous hiking, recreation, local, educational, environmental, and flora/fauna web sites; a Let's Go Green page with tips and ideas for going and staying green, including a special section for kids; and a page with nature audio, video, and interactive activities (which includes a clickable list of streaming audio bird songs and calls).

To make it easier for members to stay active, we also made it possible to pay dues and make donations via credit card. There are online forms for download (membership, volunteer, stewardship, and change in contact information) and submit electronically or by mail. The Events Calendar page now includes a link to current and forecasted East Haddam weather conditions.

Navigation of the site was enhanced as well. Each page has a standard Index link to the

main pages, and a Site Map to all content was created. Electronic archives to newsletters and activities (included other East Haddam events) are accessible. The Preserves page has a “Quick List” for downloading preserve maps.

The latest enhancement was the introduction of the Social Network, or Ning. This online platform will facilitate networking among Land Trust members and others with similar interests. In the network, you can participate in discussion forums (sometimes called an online bulletin board); post pictures, videos, and music; write weblogs (blogs); and more!

We are committed to ensuring that our web site is always current and that new content and features are added continuously. If you have questions, comments, or ideas for the site, please contact our Web Administrator at web@ehlt.org. Many thanks to our über volunteer, Maureen Gillis, for her excellent work on the web site!

