

Lake Champlain, Where People Connect

Lake Champlain International – Fishing for Friends Mentoring Program, Colchester

Participating in outdoor recreational activities can foster healthy relationships and the desire to protect our natural resources. For these two reasons, Lake Champlain International (LCI) created their Fishing for Friends Mentoring Program.

While LCI’s office is located in Colchester, it reaches out to people and communities throughout Lake Champlain’s watershed. Just as its geographic reach is far, the organization also aims to reach out to a diverse group of people, and the Fishing for Friends program is one way they do just that. About a decade ago, James Ehlers, Executive Director of LCI, realized that there were no adults available after school and on weekends to many of the children who attended the organization’s large fishing events. The kids clearly were interested in fishing, but didn’t have the means or anyone to teach them to fish. Initially, LCI began to supply bait and fishing rods to these children, but the kids needed more than just equipment. It didn’t take long for staff at LCI to realize that they needed help, too, to meet the need. So LCI teamed up with HowardCenter, an organization dedicated to the well being of children, adults, families and communities. Through this partnership, LCI advertises the need for adult mentors to take kids fishing, and HowardCenter trains the mentors and pairs them up with children who want to spend more time outside with a caring adult.

Today LCI also partners with Spectrum Youth and Family Services to do the same thing. Ehlers says the partnerships work so well, because HowardCenter and Spectrum, “help LCI to get environmental stewardship out to another audience and LCI helps them to raise awareness for the need of adult mentors in the lives of children.” And he says, “It is a logical path, because when people have a stake in a resource they tend to be concerned about its welfare and help to take care of it.”



Photo provided by Lake Champlain International

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Community Supports Summer Camp For All

Hazen’s Notch Association – Campership Fund, Montgomery Center

For some, a summer without camp is unimaginable. While for others, the thought of attending camp is only a dream. Fortunately for kids in northern Vermont, the Hazen’s Notch Association (HNA) Campership Fund makes attending summer camp a reality for many who normally couldn’t even consider it.

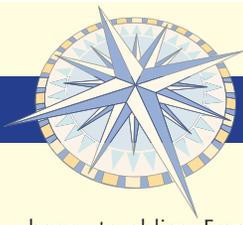
Rolf Anderson, President of HNA, explains that the idea of the Campership Fund really took off when a family who lives near HNA contacted the camp saying that they wanted to sponsor a child to attend. This family didn’t have children who attended the camp. They simply lived nearby and wanted to support the program. Anderson says, “I then asked myself how could I take this family’s generosity and multiply it?” He started by telling HNA members about the family’s kindness in the organization’s annual membership letter. There, he also invited members to contribute any amount to add to the fund. Small donations began to trickle in and add up. He then went to schools and asked if they’d be interested in helping to find students who’d want to come to camp but couldn’t afford it. The schools were



Rolf Anderson

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happy to oblige. From there, HNA went to Town Meeting to request money for the fund, and the townspeople agreed to contribute since they had heard good things about the camp.

Today the collaboration of non-profit organization, town and school continues. HNA members and town budgets contribute four to five thousand dollars each year to the fund, which enables many children to attend the camp. After the money is collected, HNA joins forces with guidance counselors from the local schools to find students who would like to attend the camp and could use financial support to do so. Anderson says, "People like to support a program where they can see the direct benefit to people."

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An Encouraging Use of Lawn Signs

St. Albans Area Watershed Association – Lawn Signs, St. Albans

At election time it's not uncommon to find signs on lawns indicating the candidates your neighbors support for public office, and in the St. Albans area, it's possible that those campaign signs will be standing next to signs supporting phosphorous free lawns.

Thanks to a grant from the Vermont Watershed Management Fund, the St. Albans Area Watershed Association (SAAWA) now provides signs to homeowners that promote using phosphorous-free fertilizer. When phosphorous runs into waterways, it encourages the growth of potentially toxic algal blooms and aquatic weeds. Much of the phosphorous that winds up in our waterways comes from fertilizers containing phosphorous, and, as Lori Coseo, administrative coordinator of SAAWA states, "The choice to use phosphorous-free fertilizer is an easy one because soils in the area don't even need phosphorous." In order to spread the word that phosphorous isn't needed for a healthy lawn, and that it actually can create unhealthy water, SAAWA distributes signs that state, "Green Lawns, Blue Water! If you fertilize, use phosphorous free." Coseo believes that the signs are effective, because she says, "The best way to encourage people to protect the lake is by seeing that their neighbors are involved."

In addition to encouraging community support of lake-friendly lawn practices, SAAWA also provides financial incentives for maintaining lawns that promote healthy water. With funding from the Agency of Natural Resources, SAAWA has been able to provide \$5 rebate coupons to those who purchase phosphorous free fertilizer. SAAWA realizes that a number of tactics often are needed to make a difference, and through both financial incentives and community support, they hope to find fewer algal blooms and aquatic weeds in Lake Champlain and its surrounding waters.



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