

Conserving Guilford's Special Places

BY THE GUILFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Our recent Community Values Mapping forum brought to mind the special places in Guilford that have been conserved or restored in recent years by groups of Guilford citizens working together. Did you know that:

The **Green River Village Preservation Trust** has worked for over 20 years to preserve and steward the historical, cultural and natural attributes of Green River Village. Their board has overseen the rebuilding of the historic Green River Dam and continues to maintain the swimming area and Community Church.

Guilford Preservation, Inc. (GPI) formed in 2002 to protect a 24-acre parcel on Route 5 from commercial development. Local citizens worked with the Vermont Land Trust to raise funds to purchase and conserve the parcel, thereby preserving the rural landscape at this major entrance to our town. GPI continues to steward the land, which has been used for cattle grazing and winter recreation.

Friends of Algiers Village (FOA-VI) formed in 2004 when a 2 acre triangle of vacant properties went up for sale in Algiers Village. In the years following, their board has worked with the town and many funding partners to revitalize the village, including the reopening of the Guilford Country Store, rehabilitation of the

Tontine Building, and the addition of 21 units of affordable housing.

Local residents organized a **Save Sweet Pond** movement in 2011 when the future of Sweet Pond was in jeopardy. Their steering committee held multiple local fundraising events and worked with our State Representative and Forest, Parks & Recreation to gather support for renovating the historic dam and restoring the pond. Renovations were completed in 2019 and the 18-acre pond refilled in 2020.

Another group of community volunteers has worked together for several years to create the **Natural Playscape** in Guilford Center. This parcel of land is now a space for families and community members to connect with one another, enjoy the natural environment, and find opportunities for young children to play and learn.

Broad Brook Community Center (BBCC) formed as a non-profit in 2015 with the goal of preserving and expanding the use of the 125-year-old Grange Hall, a beloved building in the heart of Guilford Center. BBCC has formed partnerships with the Town, Broad Brook Grange, Guilford Cares, and Guilford Central School and raised the funds needed to restore and transform the building into an active and accessible community center.

Most recently, Green River neighbors worked together with the Vermont River Conservancy (VRC) to conserve

Green River Meadows, a 17-acre parcel south of Green River Village. The land is the last major floodplain before the Green River valley narrows and played an important role in Tropical Storm Irene. Once an illegal junkyard filled with hundreds of junk cars, trailers, fuel tanks, and tires, the property was cleaned up with the help of the Windham Solid Waste District in 2003 and purchased by longtime seasonal residents who continued the cleanup over several years. In 2016 these landowners agreed to sell the property to the Vermont River Conservancy, beginning a multi-year effort to test the land for toxins (none were found) and raise the necessary funds for the purchase. With a major grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, as well as funding from the VRC and generous donations from local residents, the sale was completed and the land conserved in March of this year. The conservation easement protects the floodplain and provides public access to the property for walking, swimming, fishing, and environmental education. A riverside trail will be established for use by this summer.

As you drive through the Town and admire land that is open to the public, attend a supper at the Grange, stop at the Country Store for a snack, swim in the Green River or Sweet Pond, or

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BODY HEALING WITH NATURE

Mimi Morton Remembered

BY GAZETTE STAFF

Guilford lost one of its many important volunteers on January 10 when Mimi Morton died of pancreatic cancer. She particularly loved the Guilford Free Library and the Historical Society, serving as a trustee of both organizations for many years. After being successfully treated for breast cancer in Canada at no cost, she worked with Richard Davis and others to found the Vermont Citizens' Campaign for Health to advocate for single payer health insurance in the state. And, during the last years of her life, Mimi spent hundreds of hours as a Guardian ad Litem, advocating for children who are under the supervision of the Vermont court system through no fault of their own. She found her GAL work especially meaningful.

Although she lived in Canada from 1971 until 1999, she knew and loved Guilford through her partnership with Marty Jezer, an activist and historian who lived at the Packer Corners commune. Mimi taught writing, Humanities, and Women's Studies at Dawson College in Montreal, but she and Marty spent summers and most holidays in Guilford. Their daughter, Katie, was born in 1982 and was educated partly at the Guilford School and then at BUHS.

Mimi's relationship with Marty ended after fifteen years, and Mimi stayed in Montreal, where she continued teaching and pursuing her sidelines as a journalist and fiction writer.

In 1998 she and Rick Zamore met and fell in love, and she moved permanently to Guilford the next year, and soon

varieties of heirloom tomatoes she grew. A passionate naturalist, Mimi could identify birds on sight and by their calls, and she knew about virtually every native flower and shrub. One of her favorite late-spring-time memories was discovering and spending a very enjoyable half hour watching a turtle happily eating wild strawberries near a wetland. She and her great friend Verandah Porche learned mushrooming together, and Mimi liked nothing better than returning home from a walk through the woods with a basket of mushrooms.

Mimi completed two books during her final illness. "Before the Age of Reason, a Memoir of Racism" and "Life List." The latter is a collection of interconnected short stories, set in a fictional Vermont town not unlike Guilford. Both are available at Everyone's Books in Brattleboro and online.

Known for her vivid and entertaining personality, she could be the funniest and smartest person in the room when she wanted to be. Generous in spirit, Mimi liked nothing better than sitting at a large table, laughing with friends and family, watching them enjoy some of her unforgettable cooking. She loved Guilford and was proud to be a resident.



Photo of Mimi by Laura Moscovitz

found a job teaching at Keene State. Settling in his house on Ashworth Road, she found room to put all of her homemaking skills to work with her love of cooking and all kinds of gardening. She was well known for the many

Conserving Guilford's Special Places, continued

play with your kids at the Playscape, please take a moment to appreciate the efforts of the groups of Guilford residents that have worked together to protect these special places. And, if you would like to support any of the non-profit organizations

by donating or volunteering, please check their websites or talk to their volunteers.



Natural Playscape