

Conservation of the Dougal Range remains in the forefront

“We are pleased to announce that the East Quabbin Land Trust intends to buy a large wooded property, approximately 100 acres, formerly owned by Nancy and Latimer Hyde as our second conservation initiative along the Dougal Range,” said Cynthia Henshaw, Executive Director. “It is great to have such an important property as our first conservation foray in the Town of Ware.”

The predominantly wooded ridge that runs from the center of Ware north into Hardwick is a high conservation priority landscape for the East Quabbin Land Trust. The overall scope of 2,000 acres that is largely unfragmented is a tremendous resource for our communities. Add to that the biologically important waters of the Muddy Brook, Danforth Brook and Ware River, the miles of recreational trails and scenic beauty of wooded hillsides, and there is real reason to applaud additional conservation in the area.

The property is mostly wooded with significant frontage on Muddy Brook,

which is identified as Priority Habitat by the Mass. Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The high point of land is the eastern boundary, just off Old Gilbertville Road, and slopes to the west, some times steeply. A talus slope along the western boundary with Muddy Brook supports a rich mesic forest community with plants such as sugar maple,

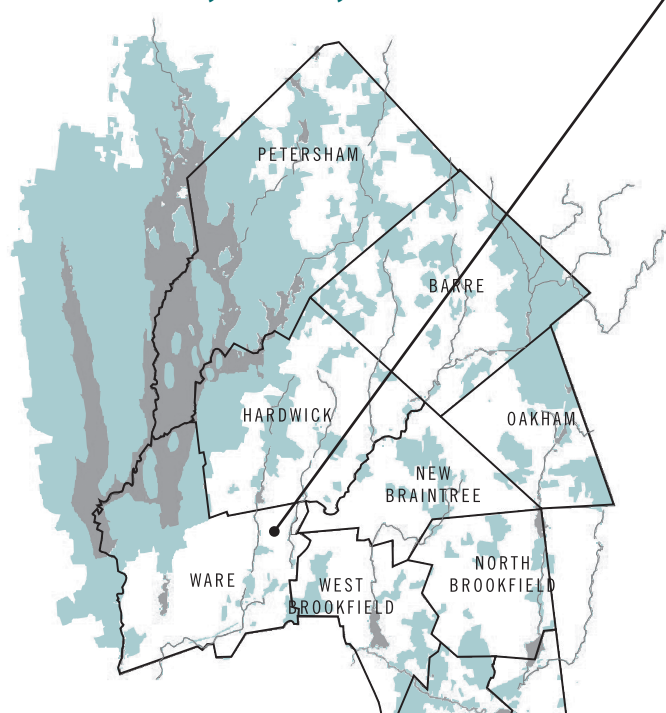
basswood, maidenhair fern, bloodroot, and nodding trillium. The land along Muddy Brook is also part of the Ware Zone 2 wellhead protection zone for the Barnes Street wells. These wells provide approximately 75% of the daily town water.

The land has not been recently harvested, and many areas of the property include mature stands of pine and mixed hardwood. The stewardship practices of the East Quabbin Land Trust include completing a forest management plan, evaluating existing trails and specific activities to protect and augment the rich biodiversity of the property. The Town of Ware recently completed forest management plans on its Town Forest properties, including

the abutting parcel. The opportunity exists to work cooperatively on land stewardship activities that promote healthy forests and excellent passive recreation opportunities with the Town of Ware.

Funding for this acquisition is committed from the Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grant program, the Community Foundation of Western Mass., the Fields Pond Foundation, and The William P. Wharton Trust. Requests to several other foundations are pending review. There is an anticipated funding gap of \$10,000. Friends, neighbors and community members are encouraged to make a contribution in support of the conservation of the Hyde property. For more information, please contact Cynthia Henshaw at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.

Hyde Realty Trust, Ware



ALERT!

Asian Longhorned Beetles

DO NOT ACCELERATE THE PROCESS

The Asian Longhorned Beetle was discovered in Worcester this past August. The USDA is working hard to eradicate this destructive beetle. It is a very slow moving beetle, and the eradication plan should be successful. The biggest threat now is people moving firewood, woody debris, lumber or nursery stock from a quarantined area. If more areas are infested, the USDA estimates 1.2 billion trees could die throughout New England. ■

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



In November, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop titled “Responding to Climate Change: Working together to Conserve Wildlife, Plants, and Habitat”. The major thrust of the meeting was how are we, as land managers and land conservationists, going to change our work to account for higher temperatures and variable amounts of water.

Melanie Fitzpatrick, a northeast climate scientist from the Union of Concerned Scientists, presented evidence that we are locked into a 2-4°F temperature increase through the middle of the century. How high the temperatures rise after 2050 depend on what we do today to reduce our emissions. Climate models suggested that by 2050 we are going to have a summer heat index of the Carolinas, there will be more frequent short term (one to three month) droughts, winter precipitation will increase but mostly as rain, and our storms will be more intense. These changes will stress some plant and animal species and favor others. Our natural communities will shift, but exactly how remains to be seen.

Climate change should be a key consideration in our conservation planning. For instance, protection of vernal pool habitat is important, but there is no guarantee that there will be enough water to support the natural community in fifty years. With rising temperatures and different rain patterns there may not be enough time for salamanders, frogs, clams and other species to reproduce. Ultimately this means that protection of a property for the sole reason to conserve a vernal pool may be a shaky rationale. Instead, focusing on north-south corridors that lend themselves to migration routes is valuable under the climate change framework.

On the land stewardship front, there are decisions we can make today that can help mitigate climate impacts in the future. Promoting the growth of long-lived trees and grasses with deep roots can enhance carbon storage. Fighting the spread of bittersweet and other invasive plants now will make it more possible to control their infestations later, when conditions improve their competitive advantage over native plants.

There are certain communities, typically those at the southern end of their ranges, more threatened by climate change, such as spruce/fir forests, northern hardwoods and boreal swamps. Also cold-water streams, ponds and lakes are threatened. Protection of the large and intact landscapes is the land trusts’ best opportunity to minimize the impact of climate change in the future. Focusing on landscapes like the Dougal range or cold-water streams like Moose Brook or Mill Brook is a key element of our response to climate change. ■

HI-TECH TREASURE HUNT... *Connects Users to the Outdoors*

Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. Yes, a computer game that takes you away from your computer to the outdoors. The basic idea is to use a GPS unit to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. A GPS unit is a device that can determine your approximate location on the planet. This past summer EQLT intern, Rachel Metterville, hid a geocache on an EQLT property. Can you find it? To learn more about the history and fun of geocaching go to www.geocaching.com. ■

New face at EQLT...

We welcome Pattie Rich as our new bookkeeper. Pattie is a native of the East Quabbin area, growing up in Oakham. She currently lives with her husband and her two young daughters in Gilbertville and regularly walks the rail trail. Pattie’s accounting experience will be a great asset to the EQLT office. ■



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VOLUNTEER PROFILE... Marion Cooper: Keeper of the Flame

by Chuk Kittredge

When I called Marion, she and her husband, Tremaine, were out of power for four days, and it's still snowing. We don't know when it's going to stop, she tells me. She's playing backgammon with husband, and I can hear little ones in the background. They have candles and a lamp, and the woodstove is going.

EQLT: So Marion, how old are you and what did you study?

Marion: I'm 35, and I graduated from UNH, with a degree in Economics and Anthropology.

EQLT: And what's your, like, day job?

M: My day job? My day job is my two children, three and four. The land trust is my 'me' time.

EQLT: Sounds about right. How did you first get involved?

M: The land trust called me - back when my daughter was 6 months old in July of 2004. I was working at the Listening in Barre, and was recommended to them. It is perfect - I live just a mile down Ridge Road and the schedule is very flexible. The job has evolved into the bookkeeper and communications and development assistant.

EQLT: But I hear you might be leaving?

M: Yes, I am leaving the area this winter and had to give up the position. We might be moving - our house is for sale. My husband travels south for his work in the winter. We're going to be snow-birds this year- gypsies with Dad and I cannot do the job on the road. Tremaine designs and builds equestrian jumps. We'll be in Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia. It's up in the air - if our place sells, we'll move closer to where the majority of his work is, we are hoping to find an area like East Quabbin.

EQLT: So you'll move the whole dog and pony show, so to speak?

M: Yes, that's right.

EQLT: Now, what aspects of the land trust have changed since you've been involved?

M: The whole job changed course when Cynthia came on board. Obviously, Cynthia has been a major change. Having a full time person, the public perception of the land trust has changed. Things weren't always so positive; I used to own the general store in the center of town, and a while back there were tensions. People every now and then used to say things like "they're going to steal my land".

EQLT: Seriously?

M: Yeah. It's taken a lot of work to get us to this point, and there is still more work to do.

EQLT: Land conservation seems to be more and more important in the area, too.

M: I see the land trust as being part of a larger natural process - something I also see in other organizations I'm involved with. As time goes on, we're going to see more about land protection. It has to become more of a focus, like with the way we eat, the way we live our lives. I think we'll see a larger focus on local economics.



Marion Cooper at her 'day job'

EQLT: Where do you see it going?

M: We're becoming more and more of a partner with local governments, landowners, and communities. With the Gould project in Petersham we worked with the town, and turned it over to Harvard. EQLT helped make it all come together. With Oakham/Hardwick open space committees, we partner with businesses and towns. We handle stewardship issues, along with managing our own properties. Things like timber-harvesting, our work with Mandell Hill - the opportunities are never-ending.

EQLT: But this must have been a tough year for financial support, with the economy in a tailspin.

M: Surprisingly, when we put out a challenge this fall for people to re-up, we had a great response. We've had a lot of new members from the Brookfields area, where we also had a bunch of smaller gatherings, and our major donors have not wavered on their support.

EQLT: But what about 2009?

M: I think EQLT be doing more and more PR this year - they are here to help, not judge or take away. We help to facilitate, and it's showing in the dollars. People have really continued their support.

EQLT: That sounds great, Marion. Any final words of wisdom?

M: I think the land trust is a great local organization. If people don't understand it, they shouldn't judge it, but I'd suggest they try to learn more about it.

EQLT: Thanks so much. Best of luck selling your house.

M: Right now, we'd settle for having the power turned back on.

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We welcome the opportunity to talk with you personally and confidentially about your interest in a philanthropic bequest to the East Quabbin Land Trust.

You can remember EQLT in your will or living trust, or name EQLT as a beneficiary of your IRA, qualified retirement plan or a life insurance policy. Let us welcome you into EQLT's legacy circle.

For further information please contact:

Cynthia Henshaw, Executive Director at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.

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MOVING FORWARD.. *Building Partnerships*

by Cynthia Henshaw

This is the final article in a series of four discussing the East Quabbin Land Trusts' goals and strategies for moving forward to meet our mission and reach our vision for the region; specifically describing our strategies to conserve the best farmland, woodland and waters in the East Quabbin region.

“Actions speak louder than words.” That’s a valuable piece of advice.

That’s not to say that our words aren’t important... as you read this quarterly newsletter... but it acknowledges that what we do to make our vision of a community that cares about its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy is critical for all.

What we do and how we do it will ensure progress towards our goals. That means reaching out beyond our traditional circles in a sustained and comprehensive manner.

Over the past year, the land trust spent considerable time and its own resources assisting communities in completing Open Space and Recreation Plans. These Plans can be valuable tools to help community members think about the local natural resources and how they wish to interact with the fields, woods and recreational areas in the future. Once drafted, a community is eligible for state grant funds to complete critical open space and recreation land acquisitions or construc-

tion projects. With these funds Hardwick purchased the New Furnace Landing and Petersham purchased the Gould woodlot conservation restriction. Ware, Petersham, Oakham and Hardwick are all considering possible conservation initiatives in 2009 because of recent efforts with their Open Space and Recreation Plan, and Barre will soon begin its Plan revision.

The land trust is also focused on gathering the financial resources to allow for action when land conservation initiatives are possible. That takes several forms, including expanding our internal Revolving Loan Fund, establishing positive relationships with private foundations, and using a Line of Credit at FamilyFirst Bank for pre-acquisition efforts. Support from individuals in response to specific conservation efforts is also a critical link for success. Conservation of the Gould woodlot and Baker parcel required support from all these arenas.

Participating in community fairs and events, as well as hosting our own educational forums, is another critical opportunity to link with our neighbors. A one-on-one conversation is the best way to share our vision and experience assisting landowners with their conservation goals. Please look for the EQLT booth at your community event, and please let us know if you have time to represent EQLT at your local event so that we can participate in many more of them! Building partnerships and networking is the best way to impact the future of our region. ■

ON THE LAND... Restoring Indian Head Rock

by Chris Buelow

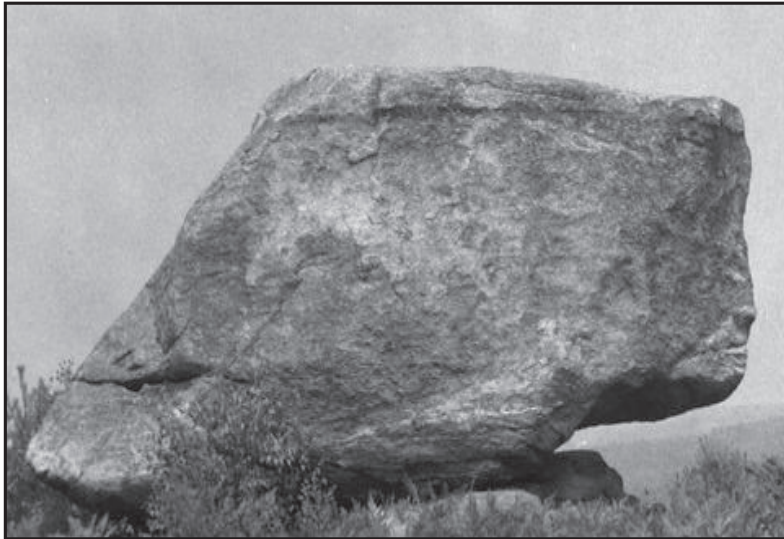
Geologic features were popular tourists destinations for New Englanders in the 19th and early 20th centuries, providing well-known, local sites for people to spend day trips in outdoor pursuits. Glacial erratics – very large boulders deposited on the landscape by retreating glaciers – were especially popular destinations and many of these boulders became quite famous for a time. In fact, post-cards featuring many of our local erratics were printed at the time to be kept as souvenirs or to be sent to friends.

References to our local erratics can still be found in local texts, but for the most part, the actual stones have faded from our thoughts as cultural recreation has shifted and local farming has waned. Forests enveloped the sites as grazing retracted, and without regular visitation, these sites soon became nearly forgotten. Indian Head Rock on the Smokey Field Farm in Barre is a classic example of this cycle. Not the largest of the local erratics, Indian Head Rock was still one of the most prominent due to its location perched high on the Springhill Ridge. The stone, about 12' high, sat upon a ledge outcrop that saw regular grazing and burning that maintained the site with a low Heathland of little bluestem grass and low bush blueberry. This unobstructed horizon provided visitors with long eastern views beyond Wachusett and western views to at least Greylock. Adding to Indian Head Rock's popularity was its shape, described as a profile of a chieftain in headdress. And surely the ledge and Heath habitat was alive with the songs of eastern towhees throughout the summer picnic season.

But the ledge Heathland surrounding the stone progressed to a white pine forest sometime in the 1970's as cattle were no longer pastured on the ridge and local ordinances outlawed grassfires. By the turn of the new century the pines had grown to enshroud Indian Head Rock, obscuring the ridge's views and relegating the site to local mythology.

Fortunately, a new turn on the cycle was set in motion for the site beginning in the 1990's. The first major event in this direction was when the land's owners, the Stelmokas family, made a decision to conserve their farm by selling a conservation restriction. This conservation project was one of the very first taken on by the East Quabbin Land Trust, who partnered with the Trustees of Reservations to help keep the Stelmokas family farm and its land intact and available for active agriculture. And that is exactly what is happening. The land is leased by Misty Brook Farm, which has

opened an on-site stand, and hoping to bolster direct business the Stelmokases approached EQLT for help in reopening the ridge-line, exposing Indian Head Rock and its views, making the great boulder a destination once again. Supporting local agriculture is a main tenet of EQLT, and a volunteer crew has begun the slow process of felling the old-field white pines, burning the associated slash and setting the stage to return the ridge to the Heathland of low bush blueberry that it was known for. A signed parking area on Springhill Road is open and a trail to the boulder is now blazed.



Indian Head Rock, before the pines grew up. At least 30 years ago.

So much of the aesthetic that we equate with old New England is directly tied with the success of our local farms. Even the lore of an old boulder named Indian Head Rock can reemerge from obscurity when the farm that it is associated with makes a comeback. The process of reclaiming this site will be slow, but within a few years the views should be restored and the site should reflect its heyday. In turn, this should further the success of the Smokey Field Farm.

The parking area for Indian Head Rock is on the east side of Springhill Road in Barre, approximately 1/2 mile north of the Hardwick line. Please contact EQLT if you would like information about volunteering at this site. ■

OUR MISSION

The East Quabbin Land Trust works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts

USDA Awards \$35 Million for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Projects Over \$970,000 Granted to MA Farms & Businesses

During the summer of 2008, USDA Rural Development awarded fifteen Section 9006 Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program (RE/EE) grants to Massachusetts' farms and small businesses.

The RE/EE program provides financial assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to support renewable energy projects across a wide range of technologies encompassing biomass (including anaerobic digesters), geothermal, hydrogen, solar and wind energy. It also provides support for energy efficiency improvements, helping recipients reduce energy consumption and improve operations.

Carter and Stevens Dairy Farm of Barre received a \$28,828 RE/EE grant to acquire and install a 15 kilowatt wind turbine which is projected to produce 27,200 kilowatts per hour of energy – approximately 45% of the farms energy needs. The farm plans on using the electricity to help power the vacuum pumps in the milking room as well as running the refrigeration unit where bulk milk is stored.

Also awarded grants were Albert Rose, of Red Apple Farm in Phillipston and Ken Foppema, owner of Foppema Farm in Northbridge. Mr. Rose

was presented with a \$19,985 RE/EE grant which will be used to purchase and install a 15 kilowatt wind turbine at his farm. Foppema Farm was awarded \$19,819 in matching federal grant funds which will be used to purchase and install a 9.75 kilowatt solar panel. Both Mr. Rose and Mr. Foppema expect to see significant reductions in electricity use at their respective farms.

In addition to receiving USDA funds for their energy projects, Carter & Stevens Farm, Red Apple Farm, and Foppema Farm also received funding from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative's renewable energy program.

USDA is currently looking for applicants for the next round of grant funding. People interested in the program, are encouraged to attend USDA Rural Development's informational outreach events which will be held at the Rutland Public Library from 9:00 to noon on January 27th 2008 and at The West Newbury Water Department on January 28th from 9:00 to noon. USDA Area Specialist, Steven Bonavita can be contacted for more information regarding the program at 508-829-4477 extension 124.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. ■

ICE STORM...

Evaluating Tree Damage

Ice storms are a common landscape disturbance and play an important role in diversifying our forests. Landowners should not panic and rush into any tree removal decisions. Damaged trees may eventually develop cavities and broken trees provide downed woody debris. Often oaks and sugar maple suffer less damage than white birches or red maple giving some trees a competitive advantage after an ice storm.

Natural disasters can be a good opportunity to learn more about our landscape and how it changes and rebounds after a disturbance. At EQLT we are encouraging landowners, as well as anyone with an interest in the land, to call their DCR Service Forester or a private consulting forester if they have questions or concerns about the effects of the storm. To see a list of foresters working in your area visit <http://masswoods.net>. ■

Support Land and Water Conservation with the new Land and Water license plate.

The Massachusetts Environmental Trust is launching a new "Land and Water Conservation" license plate that will support the conservation of land critical to the protection of the commonwealth's water resources. Land conservation plates in other states have helped conserve tens of thousands of acres in recent years. The cost of the new plates is \$40.00. The portion of the plate cost (\$28.00) which goes directly to protect land is tax-deductible. Your plate may not be available immediately, M.E.T will collect, but not cash checks for reservations until 3000 applications are collected. This may take up to one year. You can find the form and additional information about how to get the plate for your vehicle at www.MassEnvironmentalTrust.org. We encourage you to show your support of conservation and sign up for this new license plate. ■

Grant Proposals for Renewable Energy and Efficiency Projects

Workshop series on financial incentives for farms and forest product businesses.

Rutland and Newbury, MA—Want to learn more about funding available for your renewable energy or efficiency project? Attend a free workshop series for farmers and forest product business owners about financial incentives available through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 9007 Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), part of the current federal Farm Bill. REAP funding supports a diverse range of clean energy technologies: not only biofuels but also wind, solar, biomass electricity, biogas and energy efficiency. In 2008, 769 projects were awarded a total of \$34 million in grants and \$15.5 million in loan guarantees nationwide. Fifteen Massachusetts rural small businesses and farmers received \$1,039,177.

Sponsored by Massachusetts Farm Energy Program (MFEP), the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, and USDA-Rural Development, this two-part workshop will include an overview of funding, technical and financial assistance programs and eligibility requirements, as well as a hands-on look at participants' individual project proposals. Financial assistance is also available to eligible participants for grant writing services.

Workshops will be held (only one needs to be attended):

January 27th, 9 am-12 noon	January 28th, 9 am-12 noon
Town of Rutland	Town West Newbury
Rutland Public Library	Water Department
280 Main Street.	381 Main St.
Rutland, MA 01543	West Newbury, MA 01985

A follow-up grant writing workshops will be held on February 19th and again on March 19th 2009 for those interested in applying for a REAP grant and/or guaranteed loan. USDA-Rural Development, MFEP, and Mass Woodlands Institute staff will be providing one-on-one assistance. Pre-registration will be required for these sessions and participants must have attended a prior USDA REAP informational meeting or previously applied for a USDA energy grant. Funding for these free workshops has been provided through a USDA-RD Rural Business Enterprise Grant, and both Berkshire-Pioneer RC&D, the administrator of the MFEP, and MWI are equal opportunity employers.

For more information or to register for a workshop, please contact Emily Boss, Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, at 413-397-8800 or emily@masswoodlands.coop. ■

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

P.O. Box 5
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Annual Dinner and Auction

Saturday, April 11 at the Cultural Center

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WINTER 2009 | VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 1

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UPCOMING EVENTS 2009

JANUARY...

Saturday, January 31, 9:00 AM

Burning Brush, at the Deer Park Preserve – Habitat improvement work is underway, clearing the brush and small trees along the ridgeline, leaving piles of brush to burn. Please come with work gloves and appropriate clothing for being around a fire. We will be there all day, so stop by if you have an hour or two in the morning or afternoon.

FEBRUARY...

Saturday, February 7, 6:00 PM

Full Moon Ski and Bonfire – If weather conditions permit, we will be leaving from the Hardwick Common and cross-country skiing across agricultural conservation lands to Mandell Hill by light of the full moon. There will be a bonfire, marshmallows and hot cocoa near the parking area at Mandell Hill for skiers and other hearty souls. Contact EQLT at 413-477-8229 or eqlt@comcast.net for more information.

MARCH...

Sunday, March 29, 1:00 PM and again at 2:30 PM

Birds of Prey – Bring the whole family for this incredible opportunity to see eagles, hawks, falcons and owls up close. The programs are designed to explain predation, the birds' place at the top of the food web, their different hunting adaptations and their status in a rapidly changing world. The programs will be at the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill. Suggested donation of \$3/individual or \$5/family. Contact EQLT at 413-477-8229 or eqlt@comcast.net for more information.

APRIL...

Saturday, April 11, 6 PM

8th Annual Dinner & Auction – Join us for a festive dinner and silent auction in Hardwick at the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill School, catered by Reed's Catering of New Braintree. Cash Bar available. Tickets are \$55.00 per person. Call the EQLT office at 413-477-8229 to buy tickets. Don't miss this great evening.