



Andover Village
Improvement Society
Andover's Land Trust
Founded 1894

Fall 2020
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avis update

David and Jimmy Poirier, Rafton Wardens

By Alix Driscoll

Enter David, the dad, and Jimmy Poirier, 13, a rising eighth grader. Like a feature writer, they are weather aficionados. We met to chat with the cumulo-nimbus front topping five miles, a rain cloud a-making and the growling of thunder marching from the west on a swampy summer afternoon. Perhaps that is a metaphor for how the Poiriers have joined AVIS.

Upon meeting Peter Vachon, warden of Vale Reservation, when they first came to town, they set their sights on working on AVIS land. And they dug in, devoting five to 10 hours a week clearing trails and clipping brush. Jimmy began by spiffing up the wide trails of the Nat Smith Reservation as community service for the Scouts. Now they have taken responsibility for the largest reservation, the 226-acres Harold R. Rafton Reservation; a distinct challenge is the sheer size of the parcel. They share wardenship with the Schneider Electric group and Gina Bertelli. That's about 70 acres each group.

"I just like being outside," explains Jimmy grinning widely, as to why he protects his reservation, slashes, digs, hauls and renews trails.

A member of Boy Scout Troop 79, Jimmy has camped extensively on Conservation Commission land behind Wood Hill Middle School and at the Fish Brook Scout camp plus mastering winter survival training. He has earned 57 badges and is already looking forward to his Eagle project shortly. Mowing lawns gives him paid job status. Jimmy is drawn to Fish Brook and Deer Jump as favorite spots, especially the Scout Camp, and the brook itself with the beaver activity.

The forests of AVIS have a special pull for David too. "I enjoy the views on Harold's Trail. The walk through the forest is so ever changing constantly throughout the year. From snow cover to spring when the leaves pop out so quickly, in summer with the ferns so green and tall, to fall with all the amazing colors and scents. Just a really nice walk any day of the year."

While they were walking Rafton, David Dargie, AVIS's Land Manager, shared with Poirier that when he was a young boy, he and his dad, were Rafton wardens together. Poirier thought it would be a great idea, and so it is.

"I'm so proud of him being a part of AVIS at age 13; he may have a lifelong partnership with the organization."

Studying agriculture at Essex Aggie with a view to attending Northeastern will prepare him for a position as U.S. Department of Agriculture forester, Jimmy asserts. It's the Green Mountains of Vermont for him. He's been practicing at Rafton.



Jimmy Poirier and his dad, David, working at the Rafton Reservation. Photo by Mike Timko.

President's Letter

By John Hess



Dear AVIS members,

It certainly has been an interesting year. Just after AVIS celebrated its 125th Anniversary in 2019 all of us were hit by the Covid 19 pandemic. We had a great 2019 with many outdoor activities in collaboration with partners across Andover and Essex County. Hikes, talks, a beer named in honor of AVIS, and a great celebration of donors and those who completed the 125th Challenge to walk 25 reservations.

However, the pandemic really challenged us as many of our more popular reservations were experiencing very high use. Parking areas were full, and we posted notices regarding social distancing and wearing of masks. People were able to get outdoors more than ever before, and we thank all the wardens, Scouts, members, and donors who supported our effort to keep reservations open during the busy spring and early summer. While crowds have thinned out, there are still many people taking advantage of AVIS (and Town) trails.

We continue to monitor the pandemic but are planning for the next challenges for AVIS—global warming, environmental justice, and other challenges to our natural areas are realities that we need to plan for. For instance, many reservations have invasive species that need to be removed using professional personnel, which means higher costs.

We are comfortable in our financial position due to the support you have provided. We look forward to working together in the future.

The year 2021 will be the Town's 375th anniversary. AVIS will be participating. Please stand by for events; check avisandover.org for information.

Shawsheen River Reservation: – An AVIS Treasure

By Amy Janovsky

The Shawsheen River Reservation, and the adjacent Vale Reservation, is one of AVIS's jewels—offering a contemplative walk along the river trail, or a hike with a friend along the wider main trails. After years of work led by former AVIS Trustee and Ranger Dave Doub, hikers can even start at the Ballardvale train station and walk all the way to the reservation entrance on Central Street.

Eagle Scouts and adult volunteers have built the many bridges that lift hikers above boggy sections, and the benches and picnic tables that welcome relaxation. Professionals funded by state and federal grants have removed invasive plants, enhancing wildlife habitat and reopening vistas of the Shawsheen River. This work continues, primarily focused on infestations of common and glossy buckthorn, Oriental bittersweet, barberry, black swallow wort, and winged euonymus. All of these plants are displacing native species; as we bring them under control, diversity increases and ecological systems become more resilient.

You may see Ranger Dick Dillon, who keeps the trails mowed, and has created “pulloffs” so that hikers can safely pass one another and Ranger Ken Doran, whose skill with a chainsaw keeps trails open despite storm damage and falling trees, or one of our wardens, leading volunteer activities, helping to maintain and beautify the reservation, and generally acting as AVIS's eyes and ears.

On a recent site visit we were able to spot at least 50 bright red cardinal flowers, and spotted a hummingbird enjoying their nectar. Joe Pye weed is prolific along the riverbank, and you'll spot many other wildflowers along the trail. FIVE wardens comprise the Shawsheen team: Cheryl McKeough, Tim Platt, Bam Bamberg, Don Milligan and Susan Hunt. If you see the rangers or wardens when you're visiting, do stop to chat. Don enjoys sharing his knowledge of Andover's history, and Susan and Cheryl would love to help you identify the plants you spot.

A last note: Shawsheen is starting to show the impacts of increased visitor use, so please stay on the established trails, and leash your dogs. This is important not only for other hikers, but to lessen the impact dogs have on native wildlife on our reservations.



*A welcoming entrance to the Shawsheen River Reservation.
Photo by Susan Hunt.*

Eagle Scout Projects 2020

By Buzz Stapczynski

This summer AVIS's seven Boy Scouts have been working on their Eagle Scout Projects to improve our reservations.

Some of the Scouts have encountered four obstacles that have slowed their projects. The first is COVID 19 and the enormous restrictions due to the pandemic. In June, once they were allowed to move ahead with their projects, then a second obstacle arose.

All ground contact pressure-treated wood, required for their projects, was sold out because homeowners or contractors bought out the available supply in March, April and May and, as a result, lumber yards had back orders. The third obstacle was the Boy Scout age requirement. Eagle Scout projects needed to be finished and all reports in by the Scout's 18th birthday. Boy Scouts of America recognized the problem that some Scouts could be delayed due to COVID and allowed these Scouts to apply for permission to do their project after their 18th birthday. The fourth and final obstacle was the limitation on the number of Scouts who could actually go to a reservation and help build the project. Despite these limitations the Scouts persisted and we have seven projects in the planning and/or construction phase.

Nikhil Gorur, Troop 77, finished a trail improvement project in the Franciscan Section of the Deer Jump Reservation. He did a cut and fill to improve 100 feet of the trail and a 16-foot boardwalk to make a safe crossing of a stream.

Vincent Candela, Troop 79, will construct three boardwalks in the Fish Brook section of the Deer Jump Reservation. This project is adjacent to Fish Brook and needed approval from the Conservation Commission. Vincent presented his plan, for three separate boardwalks that total 105 feet in length, to the Commission and received a unanimous vote to proceed. This project will move the existing trail away from the edge of the river to a safer place and permit the use of the trail through an area that is seasonally wet.

Moiz Mahesri, Troop 77, will construct two boardwalks adjacent to Baker's Meadow in areas that are subject to seasonal flooding. One is a 12-foot extension to an existing boardwalk and the other is a new 48-foot boardwalk. Both projects will permit the trail around Bakers Meadow to be safely traversed in all weather conditions.

Ryan Gasse, Troop 79, is planning to do a boardwalk in the Harold Rafton Reservation. Both Nick Solt, Troop 77, and William Storz, Troop 76, are planning to construct boardwalks in the Rafton Reservation as well. Ryan Greenwood, Troop 77, is considering several sites for his Eagle Scout project.

The summer of 2020 had its challenges for these Scouts, but they are persistent and have overcome a number of obstacles for the benefit of themselves, AVIS and the people who use our open space and trails, which are now more important than ever.



Nikhil Gorur shows his Eagle Scout project. Courtesy photo.

Confronting Racism

To all friends of AVIS and our valued Andover open spaces:

Like many of you, we are appalled by the injustices and acts of violence against racially marginalized groups. The events that have unfolded in the past weeks and months shake us all. The murders of unarmed Black people over decades, and the recent protests (that have followed), illustrate the historic, systemic racism and environmental injustice that exists in our country towards people of color, especially Black and Brown people.

To address these injustices, we commit to work with partners and grassroots organizations to ensure everyone has access to clean air, clean water, and open space; we will focus on the climate crisis, which causes people of color to bear the burden of some of climate change's worst impacts; we will work to ensure we create access to our reservations and trails that is safe and welcoming to everyone; we will reach out to and work with environmental partners in Lawrence and other Greater Lawrence communities. In particular, we will continue to work to increase linkages between AVIS trails and trails in Lawrence along the rivers.

Systemic racism is a public health and environmental issue. We recognize the leadership of frontline organizations and individuals. We stand with them in the call for justice, accountability, and an end to violence. We additionally commit to educating ourselves, our families and loved ones on the historic and current racism across Massachusetts, to understand cultures and practices that perpetuate systems of racism, and to advocate for policies and support elected leaders willing to address these issues.

We can take action in the following ways:

- Urge Congress to Take Action: and support a resolution filed by Rep. Ayanna Pressley and others to condemn police brutality, racial profiling, and use of excessive force.
- Register voters: Support the voter registration efforts of Greater Andover Indivisible <http://indivisibleandoverma.com>
- Educate yourself and the people around you: Non-Black allies have a responsibility to deepen their understanding of how racism affects us all by reading anti-racism resources and having conversations with family and friends.

We have much work to do to become more inclusive so we can better represent the diversity in both Andover and Greater Lawrence. We will reach out to include more people of color as members, participants and trustees. We hope you will stand with us in solidarity with those fighting racism and injustice, and share your thoughts on how we can make AVIS and Andover a stronger, more just community where people of color feel safe and welcome walking our open space. Thank you from the AVIS Trustees

2019 Financial Summary

Based on adjusted trial balance from the outside CPA

Income		Expenses	
Membership Dues	\$ 26,555.00	Fundraising	\$ 11,402.15
Contributions/Grants	94,994.06	Program Services	54,348.42
Change in Investment	109,012.01	Management/General	18,964.13
Other	17,759.97	Other	18,868.06
TOTAL	\$ 248,321.04	TOTAL	\$ 103,582.7
		Net Income/(Loss)	\$ 144,738.28

Work by Force Friday

By Michaela Buckley, a member of Force Friday

During my time volunteering in the AVIS trails, I helped our group to carry logs from the back of one of the trails to the entrance in order to make them more accessible to those who needed them. We also picked up trash and random items from the trails and surrounding areas. I loved doing this because it showed me the daily work that is put into the most beautiful recreation areas in our town. My dad and I love hiking and we love to take our dog along the trails throughout the year.

By Luke Zytkovicz, a member of Force Friday

I had the opportunity to take part in two Force Friday experiences. The work we did was not only helpful but was important for everyone who uses the beautiful AVIS trails, me included. We were usually doing something simple, like moving lumber or removing an old fence, but there is never a dull moment when you're at AVIS.

The Force Friday, sponsored by Andover Youth Services, has been doing projects throughout the summer. The teens have been working on a list provided by David Dargie and have completed projects at Goldsmith (removing 150 ft. of old fencing), cutting back the West Parish Meadow, installing a signpost in Deer Jump and cutting back a trail off Jillian Way.



(L-R) Mae Wallace, Amy Pinkham, Elise Porter, Nevada Fahey, Mikey Wiley, Nick Leonard, Luke Zytkovicz (back), Emily Serrano, Michaela Buckley, Zach Walker, all members of the Force Friday, and some of the trash they hauled off the Rafton Reservation in August. Courtesy photo

New Members

Mark Ayvazian	Martin Gladstein	Ann Ormond
Michael Bellia	Barry Green	Judith Schott
Lee Caplan	Margaret Griffin	Susan Scott
Shourov Chatterji	Mark Hodges	Zona Sharfman
Scott A. and Jeanne E. Clark	Caroline Hughes	Sharon Suzor
Robert Costello	Sean Lane	Helen Thiele
Lisa DiAntonio	Meghan Lee	Alayna Tress
Denise Engelhart	Jason Liss	Timm Triplett
Robert Fantini	Erich O'Neil	Myron A. Tucker
	Anthony Ong	Joyce Losick-Yang

AVIS
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AVIS Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Dues: _____ \$30 Individual _____ \$100 Sustaining

_____ \$50 Family _____ \$15 Student & Senior

You can join or renew online at www.avisandover.org/join.html or make check payable to "AVIS" and mail to :

AVIS
PO Box 5097
Andover, MA 01810.

For information about planned giving or stock donations contact info@avisandover.org. Contributions and dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by federal regulations. Thank you!

For additional AVIS events see
AVISANDOVER.ORG

To check for other hikes visit
ANDOVERTRAILS.ORG

For AMC walks see
AMCBOSTON.ORG

The AVIS Update is a biannual publication of The Andover Village Improvement Society. The mission of AVIS is to acquire and preserve Andover land in its natural state. More than 1,200 acres of land are managed by AVIS and are open to all for passive recreation.

Please be sure to check our website, avisandover.org, for hikes and other activities during the fall and winter.



AVIS EVENTS

**Sunday, January 31,
51st Annual Harold R. Rafton
Snowshoe Hike.**

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Harold Rafton Reservation
273 High Plain Rd.

Park near the leaf composting area
on High Plain Road.
No registration, no pets.
Hike if no snow.
Rain cancels

Leaders David Dargie (987) 996-4475
Burt Batcheller and Ken Doran

**Sunday, February 14
Family Moonlight Snowshoe/
Hike**

Valentine's Day

6:00 -8:00 p.m., Goldsmith
Woodlands

491 South Main Street

Hike if no snow.
No pets. Rain cancels

Leader: David Dargie (978)-996-
4475, Burt Batcheller and Ken Doran

Be sure to check the website
AVISAndover.org



Hazel Sutton, who completed the AVIS Challenge hiking 25 reservations last year with Jim and Vicky Sutton, wants to remind all hikers to stay on the trails. Courtesy photo.

JOHN HESS
President

JIM SUTTON
Membership

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Editor

LINDSEY CHANDLER
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