

Grant Enables STEM Project Success

IN THE FALL OF 2016, THE EIGHTH-GRADE JUNIOR RANGERS from the San Miguel Academy of Newburgh in New York were challenged with a 50-foot climb of the Trapps at Mohonk Preserve (accredited). On his first attempt, one student named Ronald climbed about 10 feet before descending back down the wall. Frazzled and trembling, he took a break. After watching a few classmates climb farther up the wall, Ronald was inspired. He took a deep breath, took his place in line and psyched himself up for the climb. With the support of his classmates and cheers of Mohonk Preserve staff, Ronald ascended to the highest point.

Ronald was one of many students who benefited from the STEM Rising project undertaken by Mohonk Preserve and funded in part by a New York State Conservation Partnership Program grant administered by the Land Trust Alliance. The program sought to introduce underserved students to STEM

(science, technology, engineering, mathematics) through nature-based education; improve student engagement and aptitude in STEM disciplines and conservation practices; increase student awareness and understanding of land conservation ethics and wildlife and habitat protection; enhance student literacy and content retention; and motivate and improve student learning through a STEM-based outdoor curriculum.

By project end, 222 students had participated in Mohonk Preserve's outdoor STEM field study programs. In addition to the San Miguel Academy students came from the Nora Cronin Presentation Academy and the Rondout Valley Central School District.

"The project enabled Mohonk Preserve to provide the students with positive experiences in nature, expand access to underserved and marginalized populations and strengthen their commitments to the environment in our community, our region



Students atop the Millbrook Ridge Trail climb to new heights at Mohonk Preserve.

and our world," wrote the Preserve's grant manager, Eric Roth, in a report.

"The Preserve's educational field studies also met the academic needs of partnering schools, including the increasing demand for STEM-based programming and college readiness preparation," wrote Roth. "Students in Newburgh are better trained and informed about their career potential, including the rapidly growing field of STEM. And it is our hope that these young people will return to their community as mentors to the next generation of Newburgh students and important voices for responsible stewardship of the natural environment." •

Ear to the Ground

Home to the threatened eastern massasauga rattlesnake, over 100 bird species, at least seven different kinds of orchid and one of the few populations left in the world of the Mitchell's satyr butterfly, **Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy's** (accredited) Portman Nature Preserve has received a Wings Across the Americas award in the Habitat Conservation Partnership category. The award recognizes U.S. Forest Service employees and their partners for work on bird, bat, butterfly and dragonfly conservation. Conservation Director Nate Fuller told the online site MLive that the award is thanks to the continued support of the community, national and state grants and conservancy workers and volunteers. "It's been a project from my heart for over a decade."

Twenty-five years ago, in the midst of the "timber wars," **Pacific Forest Trust** (accredited) identified the need for new approaches, tools and incentives to help landowners conserve their forests for the many private and public benefits they offer, including clean water, homes for wildlife and a healthy climate. Watch a video celebrating its anniversary at www.pacificforest.org/video-25-years-radical-middle.

Congratulations to **Traci Deen** who, in addition to her role as the accredited **Conservation Florida's** executive director, was sworn in as the legislative director for the Florida Association of Women Lawyers Board of Directors.

Maine's Island Heritage Trust announced the arrival of **Paul Miller**, who succeeded **Mike Little** as the trust's new executive director on June 1. Little retired after 10 years of service. For the month of May, Miller and Little worked together in order to effect a smooth transition.

The **Pennsylvania Land Trust Association** honored **Andy Pitz** with the Lifetime Conservation Leadership Award at its 2018 Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference. Pitz, executive director of the accredited **French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust** is also a founder and long-serving president of PALTA.

When **Marin Agricultural Land Trust** (accredited) opened its doors in 1980, its founders' ideas for saving small family farms from development were grand but untested. Now MALT has hit a major milestone: a cumulative 50,000 acres of farmland protected, halfway to its ultimate goal of 100,000 acres. 🌱