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Friends of Mianus River Park

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## History



Here are pictures from a work day July 2005.  
Recognize Erin?



Mianus River Park has benefited from ad hoc volunteers for a long time but the work got serious in 2004. The park, with substantially less use than now, was getting vary degraded. The understory, especially around the river was non existent. Tree roots were exposed. The river was getting shallower because of the dirt running off into it. Boot- legged trails were abundant. Erin McKinna got a grant and started focus groups run by a gentleman from the Forestry Service. Work began in earnest in 2005, funded initially by the City with grants and fines . The city also put up some kiosks with before and after pictures, maps, and instructions. The Friends did what they could using mostly materials from the city, deadfall and personal tools and their own funds.

I incorporated The Friends of Mianus River Park, Inc. as a non stock not for profit corporation in Connecticut in 2010 and thereafter got 501c3 status. We opened a bank account and began to solicit funds and seek grants.

## Groups

We work with many groups and individuals. This is just a sample:

Rye County Day School. This summer, members of the Outdoor Club came twice a week and did a variety of tasks. They repaired fences, closed boot-leg trails, and put up new fencing both deer fencing and post and rail fencing. In the past we have had small groups for only a week. One year the group put up a rope fence, pictured below.

Boy Scouts. The scouts from several troops from both Stamford and Greenwich have done community service projects and eagle projects. This year alone, they rerouted a portion of the East River Trail, built several boardwalks and helped put up 400 feet of post and rail fencing. Another scout is seeking approval to work on the parking lot on Merriebrook.

New England Mountain Bikers Association. They do projects in the park such as closing boot-legged trails, and rerouting trails. At several places they have also reinforced trails with stone.



The members also help us with “Friends” projects



Trout Unlimited (TU) has been involved for a long time. In recent years we have worked with them to restore the riverbank, putting up fencing and planting. TU spearheaded the hardened access projects and the revetment work to prevent erosion.





Aquarion. Aquarion has been a steady helpmate. In 2013, Aquarion volunteers, as part of their annual Earth Day Project helped the Friends use funds it received in a grant from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund. They put up deer fencing, cleared invasive plants and prepared the soil and planted native plants on a one-acre site between River Road and West River Trail and along the river. In 2014 Aquarion volunteers helped replace some of the deer fencing, laid mulch and planted the “Urban Oasis”. They also relined trails, demolished bike jumps, and pulled invasive plants. In 2015 Aquarion volunteers put additional plants in area designated at the Urban Oasis, and laid down more mulch and put additional plants along the riverbank by the West River Trail. In 2016 the volunteers installed post and rail fencing along the River Road and also put in plants in the hillside at the entrance to the park. For Aquarion’s 2019 Earth Day project the volunteers laid stone around the hardened access in the middle of Meander trail, which is very muddy and installed approximately 200 feet of post and rail fence to close off the opening that the equipment making the hardened access caused. Aquarion has also contributed financially to the Friends.

**Hardened Accesses.** To encourage people to use designated entry points into the river we worked with Trout Unlimited to put in hardened access points. We install and maintain the fencing around the area.



**Revetment work.** Aka the Habitat Restoration Project .One of the greatest threats to the Mianus River and the suburban streams that feed into it, according to TU, is the loss of in-stream habitat due to more frequent and powerful flooding events. These floods cause erosion of the Mianus River streambanks - some already de-stabilized due to bootleg trails or unfettered access to the water by dogs, walkers and anglers. The erosion causes the stream channel to widen, reducing the water depth and creating less cover and shelter for trout and other aquatic life. At the same time, all of the eroded soils washing into the river cover the streambed, burying the river cobble and reducing the habitat for aquatic insects which make up the base of the river food chain. Conifer revetment helps reverse this pattern of flooding, erosion and channelization. The project involves taking cut pine trees and hauling them into the river, laying them horizontally along the bank and then anchoring them in with three-foot

long arborist anchors and rope.

The thick limbs of the pine trees are so dense that when the river floods and flows over them, they slow the current so the fine silt and sediment settles within the tree. After one to two floods, the trees are almost entirely filled with sand and soil and the river bank has been stabilized and extended back out into the stream. This narrows the river. Lastly, plantings are made along the riverbank to further stabilize it and in time, additional plantings will be made over the area where the conifer trees are placed.

### Urban Oasis



Audubon Connecticut, together with The Friends of Mianus River Park and the City of Stamford and numerous volunteers, restored forest understory habitat at a site along the Mianus River- inside the Mianus River Park. This site, an Urban Oasis, joins a network of Oases across Connecticut. These restored habitats benefit wildlife and people. The newly planted site offers high-quality habitat for migrating songbirds to rest and refuel. The area also provides a buffer to runoff, protecting the Mianus River, an important source of drinking water for thousands.

**Fences.** Over the years we have put up a variety of fencing to keep the deer from eating the understory and to keep people and dogs on the trails. We have used a variety of techniques as we learn more.

We started with deer fencing of varying heights and most of it is still standing.





Post and rail. We've been installed. It is relatively easy to install, weathers well, people like it and requires little maintenance. Since 2016 we have installed about 1,500 feet around the park



Rope. We used this on a stretch of trail that seemed to require less guidance.



Green wire. We tried this because it was easy to install but it is easy to break and difficult to fix.

**Poop bags.** The city installed two dispensers and supplies the bags. We keep them filled and several of our volunteers collect the filled ones if the users leave them.

**Plants.** Since 2005 we have planted about \$20,000 worth of native plants. With the exception of the daffodil bulbs at the park entrance, we have not had much luck. We believe it is a combination of inadequate sunlight, poor soil, and the lack of volunteers to water. In the fenced off areas, there is green though and it was certainly worth a try.

## List of board of directors

Mary Ellen Burns, President/Treasurer . Volunteer coordinator, fence repairer and project designer. burnsm@optonline.net

Pete Sofman former president, and original board member. Trail clearer, planter, repairman. Also leads hikes in the park

Chris Aldrich Director of Stewardship for Greenwich Land Trust. Helps with projects

Craig Kennedy, Secretary and in charge of filling the poop bag dispenser

Linda Chapman communications chair and litter pickerupper also worked on the revised website.

Nell Solley lives next door to park and with her husband and daughters clear trails, weeds and plants. Also worked on the new trail signs.

Nathan Kress his house abuts the east river trail and is a general fixer upper.

Heidi Deluca fundraising chair and also writes the thank you notes to donors.

Mark Berni designed the new map and helps with projects.

Scott Shaule general helper, very handy.

Our board has always been a working board. Each member contributes hours of work in the park.

We generally meet once a month and since March 2020 have been doing so by zoom. We have an annual meeting in January.

## Parking Lot



The City built the parking lot, which until then was just a hillside cleared of trees. The Friends clean it up and have done some plantings. We may have an eagle scout project doing weeding, planting and installing bird houses and a planter.

## Fund raising

In nice weather we have put a table out by the gate to explain what we do.

Fairfield County Giving Day

Mail to neighbors

Emails to our email list which is approximately 850 names

Our website provides ways to join and contribute.

Have received about \$ 118,000 in donations, grants and matching gifts from individuals, companies, and organizations such as Greenwich Audubon, Aquarian, The Turning Point Foundation and The Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

As an aside, we send thank you notes to our donors and give them a Friends of Mianus River Park sticker.

With those funds we buy tools, fencing, topsoil, rocks, both flat and round. We have purchased rocks for various projects, particularly to cover muddy sections of the trails, reinforce the trails and in the case of the hardened accesses, build the accesses. We also occasionally pay for services such as spraying mugwort, and repairing kiosks,

This of course does not include what the city of Stamford does.

Some organizations we use to facilitate giving are Givebutter, PayPal and Amazon Smile.



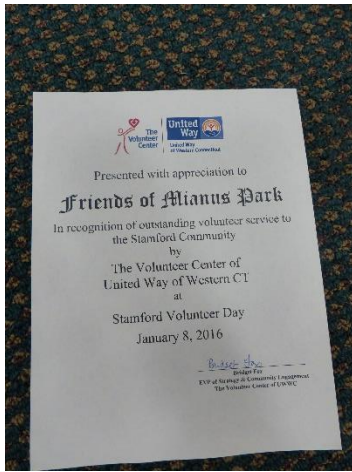
 Powered by Givebutter

We have a gold star rating from Guidestar

Between the board, both past and present and the various groups and individuals, we have logged thousands of man hours.

In addition to donations and thank you notes, we also got an award from the United Way





## BENCHES



We have thus far installed 4 on the west side of the river and 3 on the east side. We will be asking permission for two more, one on each side. The friends paid for two and others wishing to honor someone have paid for the rest. Each has a plaque honoring the person requested by the donor.





## Financial

I keep a ledger all year with income and expenses. Then normally I do a balance sheet and income statement at year end.

As of December 31, 2023

### Assets

#### Current Assets

Cash in bank	\$	26,037.98
Cash-restricted	\$	0.00
Inventory	\$	0.00
Pre-paid expenses	\$	0.00
Grants and accounts receivable	\$	0.00
Securities +cash in Capitol acct.	\$	13,076.01
Total Current Assets	\$	39,113.99

#### Property and Equipment, at cost

Building	\$	0.00
Building Improvements	\$	0.00
Tools, office supplies and Equipment	\$	2,500.00
Total Property & Equipment	\$	2,500.00
Less accumulated depreciation	\$	0.00
Property & Equipment, net	\$	2,500.00
Total Assets	\$	41,613.99

### Liabilities and Net Assets

#### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$	0.00
Total Current Liabilities	\$	0.00
Total Liabilities	\$	0.00


#### Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$	41,613.99
Temporarily restricted	\$	0.00
Permanently restricted	\$	0.00
Total net assets	\$	41,613.99

We have a checking account at Wells Fargo and a brokerage account at Charles Schwab. In April I prepare a 990 EZ to file with the federal government. This is available for donors to see and if fact, we have been asked for it.

## MAP

We have a revised map.




Mianus River Park is a 391-acre nature reserve on the Greenwich / Stamford border in Connecticut. The park, one of a series of green areas in the Mianus River Watershed, features a two-mile stretch of the beautiful Mianus River, forest lands, vernal pools, glacial outcroppings, varied wildlife and miles of rolling trails. Find out more at [www.friendsofmianusriverpark.org](http://www.friendsofmianusriverpark.org).

Please take a picture of this map with your phone to use as you explore the park.

- Mianus River Park Land
- Mianus River State Park Land
- Nature Trail - 2.6 mi.
- Yellow Loop - 4.5 mi.
- City Border
- Park Boundary
- 1 Intersection Markers - Shows your exact location on the map


**CONTACT INFORMATION**  
 Complaints and Compliments: Office of Stamford Services Center - (203) 277-4166  
 Dog Issues, Sanitation and Care: City of Stamford - (203) 277-4137  
 Park Use and Activities: Friends of Mianus River Park - www.friendsofmianusriverpark.org  
 Fishing: Mianus Chapter of Trout Unlimited - www.trout.org

**PARK MANAGEMENT PARTNERS**  
 City of Stamford  
 Town of Greenwich  
 Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection  
 Department of Conservation Services  
 The Greenwich Land Trust




## ALL VISITORS

- Open Daily from Sunrise to Sunset
- Follow "Leave no Trace" principles
- Stay on the existing trails
- Avoid the river's edge, fenced areas and private property
- Protect the river by using designated access points
- Carry all garbage out of the park with you
- Prohibited: Camping, starting fires, hunting, using motorized vehicles and removing plant materials




## DOG OWNERS

- Leash your dog at all times
- Pick up your dog's waste, carry with you to one of the park's trash bins
- Keep dogs away from sensitive riverbank areas to avoid erosion
- Prohibited: Commercial dog walking



## BICYCLISTS

- Alert hikers of your approach and slow down when passing
- Avoid biking when the trails are wet
- Keep off the fragile river-edge trails
- Prohibited: Biking on Greenwich side of park

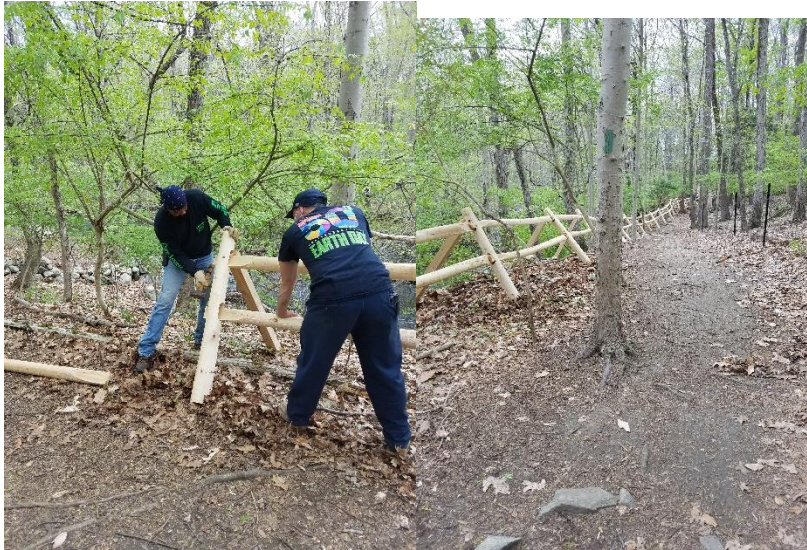


## FISHING

- Fish only with valid license and Trout & Salmon Stamp
- Follow Connecticut fishing rules and posted catch and release laws
  - September 1st to 2nd Saturday in April - Catch and release only. Single hook artificial lures. No bait allowed.
  - Second Saturday in April to September 1st - Lures and bait allowed. Keep maximum of 2 trout per day.

## 2021 projects and activities at Mianus River Park

Installed 370 feet of post and rail fence along west river trail starting at trail head just before gate , Lay Flat stones along urban oasis trail along river and on River Walk, where muddy.  
Completed by Aquarion



Dismantle lean-tos and forts. The city dismantled the big ones and volunteers took down the smaller ones.



Laid deadfall on island where the city took down the fort completed by Aquarion



Installed new trail maps and scannable signs



Website updated and Facebook page kept current  
Laid flat stones on stream on inner road



**Matt Tolla Eagle Project:** weeding, planting ferns, cleaning parts of parking lot and installing



fencing, bird houses and flower boxes which they built.



East River Trail. Reclosed closed portion of closed trail on East river, and put down deadfall along new trail to deter shortcuts.

Finished making and installing new trail signs including Sofman Swizzle



**Matthew Beck Eagle project.** Installed 3 boardwalks, one by urban oasis, one on inner trail and



one off Pine, by 2<sup>nd</sup> loop

**More post and rail fencing.** Installed post and rail fencing and moved trail in a little along approximately 550 feet from top of Meander to bend in the river and took down deer fence. Rye Country day students helped as well as our board members. All the fencing is installed to keep people on the trails. Initially we put up deer fence because with the increased use in the summer of 2020, people were creating a second trail, parallel to Meander much closer to the river. This October we were able to take down the deer fence and replace it with the post and rail.





Kept trails clear of fallen trees

**Movie.** A Netflix movie was made over two weeks in October in the park, entitled **Happiness for Beginners**. The crew was very respectful of the park and made a generous donation to the Friends. The main characters were Ellie Kemper (***Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt***), Luke Grimes (***Yellowstone***), Nico Santos (***Crazy Rich Asians***) and Blythe Danner (***I'll See You in My Dreams***). The movie is a Netflix romantic comedy from writer-director Vicky Wight (***The Lost Husband***, ***The Volunteer***). The film is based on Katherine Center's novel of the same name and centers on Helen (Kemper), who signs up for a wilderness survival course a year after getting divorced. She discovers through this experience that in forgetting she has found herself







**monthly hikes.** The notice on our website read

Please join the Friends for our first monthly hike on Monday, June 7th at 9:00 am. We are calling these Hikes Pliques. We are borrowing the term from the Swedes who combine jogging and plocka upp (to pick up) to obtain ***plogging***. Thus Hiking plus plocka upp, gets us Pliking.

Our Pliques will run about 2 hours and will be to the less used areas of the park, allowing us the opportunity to explore, check on the status of less used trails, and tidy up as we go.

We will meet on the first Monday of every month, with the first being June 7th. In the event of rain, we will meet on the following Monday. Please be sure to check our Facebook page if you have any questions regarding the weather.

Our meeting point is 9:00 am at the bridge on Merribrooke Lane in Stamford. Please wear bug spray, bring gloves and a small trash bag. We hope that you can join us.

## Activities and projects 2022



Aquarian again gave us a day of labor

Remove deer fence at beginning of west river trail (by gate) coincident with post and rail fence installed in the spring of 2021

At end of paved path to fishing platform, install 40 feet of post from rock toward road rock at platform,. Also repaired the green fencing.



Continued post and rail on River Road (by Kiosk) to top of southern tip of Meander down to River 175 feet and removed deer fencing



Completed the post and rail that ran from Top of Meander (at end of River) Run a bit of metal fence along last 10 feet to make the point that the bootleg trail is closed.

Re lined trail by pumphouse on East River and fill in short cuts with dead full.

Added Second string of Rope fencing to rope and post fence and Clean up deer fencing by rope fence

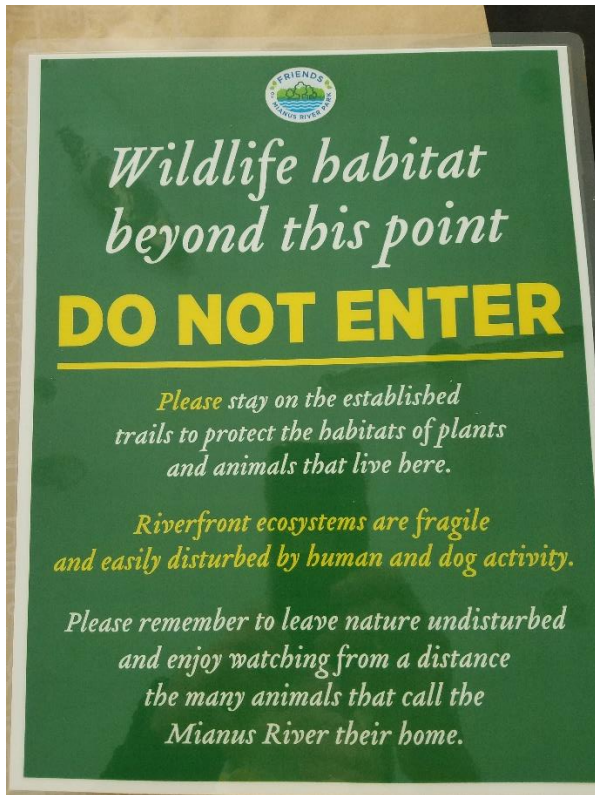


Cut down poles and lower fence On little square of rehabilitated land on west side at end of meander (city supplied topsoil and we laid the netting in addition to planting several years ago. ). Replace with post and rail fence on two sides. Used about 130 feet of post and rail



Maintenance or restoration of the island at northeast passage is ongoing. We have dismantled structures several times, both in 2021 and 2022, removed steps that are carved into island and Raked leaves and put more deadfall over island to make it look less inviting. Also put up sign  
The people who have been making the fort on the island off of NE passage we're at it again. When we had the trails day we again naturalized the island. (For the 6th time this year!?! ) They had again moved rocks, dug out stairs and cleared lots of paths throughout. Very much making this their camp. We again raked leaves, pulled deadfall to cover the paths and moved rocks. This has happened so many times now that Mary Ellen and Erin's husband helped me make a laminated sign to post. Asks people to stay on the established trails and to leave nature undisturbed.





Tack fencing, either deer or wire along bottom of post and rail at end of northern installation About 20 feet running from the river upwards to make it clear that the trail is closed. Secured the post and rail in middle of meander, which keeps either falling or being knocked down.

June 2022 had a volunteer day

The city rehung the left gate at the entrance of the park after it fell down .





The city also put in a new poop bag dispenser at the entrance to the park to replace the one



that fell over.

Replaced paper signs with wooden signs pointing to rerouted trail by pumphouse on east river trail. Earlier in the year aquarian had cleared the trail and closed the bootleg section.



Note about mugwort. We signed a contract for multiyear spaying. The first was in September.





Dismantled more teepees on east river trail



Plaques. Over the last year we have put several plaques on the post and rail fence for a



contribution



## Stamford Land Trust

Two of our board members manned a table at the annual meeting of the Stamford Land Trust,



which is celebrating its 50 year



Trout Unlimited got over 30 volunteers in October to plant trees in honor of Ben



Woods, a TU intern



## November 4<sup>th</sup> Trail Day.

We asked volunteers to join the Friends for a morning of light trail work at the park. They met on Friday, November 4th, at 9:00 am at the Red Barn on Merribrooke Lane in Stamford.



We spent about two hours tidying up the park and performing general maintenance. This is in addition to the ongoing trail work the Friends perform all year.

**Eagle Scout Project** Matt R from troop 11, Stamford and his troop mates built a platform around the information kiosk at the Stamford entrance to the park.



In addition to a very active board of directors, I want to give a shout out to a few people who are always ready, willing and able to help out.

Richard Zavoluk (Mary Ellen's husband)

George Rough, a neighbor

Josh Solley (Nell's husband)

Ryan Tucker (former board member)

**2023, another good and busy year.**



Volunteers clearing the East river Trail after a big beech fell.  
Another day of fence repair







Finishing up Meander

Eagle scout project



The steps were installed in 2022 and the bench was added in 2023





The Mianus Chapter of Trout Unlimited holds a Christmas Tree "eco-cycling" drive at Mianus River Park in Stamford on Saturday. Volunteers from Trout Unlimited will happily turn your natural tree into important habitat for trout in the Mianus River. The trees will join others in helping stabilize stream-banks, reduce erosion, and create refuge habitat for juvenile trout and other aquatic life.



The Greenwich Land Trust and Friends of Mianus River Park led a **winter walk** Tuesday to show hikers the natural and historical features of Mianus River Park at the border of Greenwich and Stamford. The Greenwich Land Trust permanently protects and cares for more than 848 acres of woodlands, marshlands, orchards, and meadows throughout Greenwich





Aquarion once again lent a hand and helped install more



post and rail fence.



**May Volunteer Day.** We had a team of 6. The team worked to close the bootleg bike trail on Inner trail moved many heavy rocks to deter bikers from the route. We also and installed a sign at the top asking bikers to please stay on established, marked trails. The team also cleared the weeds out of the two Boy Scout planters in the parking lot and put black garbage bags on the soil in the boxes to try to stop other weeds from emerging. They also pulled and bagged mustard weed from around the parking area.



**Earth Day Clean up and Beatification** . Greenwich led a volunteer day in April on the Conewaugh entrance. They planted trees and grasses and cleaned up debris. It was organized by Sue Bodson, a member of the town of Greenwich Parks and Recreation board and a member of the town of Greenwich Parks and Recreation Foundation and Greg Kramer. Another such event is planned for this April.

**Trail Day Hike Sunday June 4** led by board members Craig Kennedy and Mark Berni







Later that year, we got some enthusiastic volunteers from Apple



We have basically finished the fencing along Meander.



This year we installed a bench on Dam Road in Greenwich



**A great example of before and after. A spot on Meander. 2015**



f  
2017 after the hardended access was installed.



Today







**Plaques on fencing.** As an alternative to benches, which are expensive, for a donation we



installed more plaques on the fencing.





## Plantings around parking lot and work on invasive species



We have engaged in a project to remove invasive species and replace them with native plantings in the parking area and adjacent sites. We knew when we started that the project would evolve as to how to best and most cost-effectively rehabilitate the area. The Friends started the project in 2022 by engaging All Habitats LLC to conduct a three-year spraying program to rid the parking areas of mugwort. We also hired All Habitats to spray a section of the Fishing Platform and a few ancillary areas to eradicate mugwort. They completed the first application mid-summer (five additional applications). For the Fishing platform, we are testing different eradication methods:



1. Smothering using a 6-8 inch thick layer of wood chips.
2. Solarizing using a heavy plastic tarp.
3. Applying a selective broadleaf herbicide, directly to each invasive.

Throughout the summer, UConn Master Gardeners and volunteers cleared and weeded the parking areas. They identified plants that will be retained and worked on removing additional invasives and weeds. Larry Weaner from LWLA Landscaping was engaged to review our site and a suggested seed mix for the area. He provided a detailed planting program for the back portion of the parking area that we will implement this summer. Rather than Hydroseeding, he recommended hand sowing as a more cost-effective alternative.

We also planted a variety of ferns in the bioswale. Some were purchased rootstock, while the remainder were donated plants. In addition to completing the parking area

next year, we will follow a similar plan to replant the Fishing platform with native species.

Master gardeners work on the parking lot and Micro grant from the city of stamford

**We have monthly plike hikes.** The Plike runs for about two hours on and is on the less-traveled areas of the park, allowing time for exploration and checking on the status of less-used trails. The walkers pick up debris as we go.

In November we planted daffodils again along the road leading up to the entrance. They add a bit of color in early spring.



