



BWLT NEWS

Protecting The Land You Love

February, 2026



Clapboard Oak Brook, Bridgewater

Bridgewater: A Century Ago

*Commemorating the 100th Anniversary
of the Burnham Library*

The Burnham Library's 100 year celebration has given us a rare opportunity to look back at what our town was like a century ago. It is truly remarkable, and a little hard to imagine, how much has changed between the 1920s and today. Nowhere is that transformation more striking than in the land itself and the ways it was used.

Looking back also offers perspective. Our rural, agrarian roots are still visible, woven into the landscape and the character of the town. The desire to live in a quiet countryside, surrounded by natural beauty, has long been an essential part of our history and remains so today.

In February, we will share what we have uncovered. Thanks in large part to the historical images and documents preserved by the Bridgewater Historical Society, we are able to paint a vivid picture of life here 100 years ago. We will explore tobacco fields and dairy farming, waterways, flora and fauna, and everyday life in the heart of the village anchored by the newly built Burnham Library and School. And if you're wondering how national forces of the 1920s, most notably Prohibition and Women's Suffrage, played out here in Bridgewater... you'll soon find out!

Event details are below.



1924 - The horse and buggy in the bottom right of the photo is heading along Warner Road towards Christian Street. Hay fields are in the foreground with Hat Shop Hill and Second Hill visible in the distance.

Welcome New Board Members

Thank you Peg Toledo

We enthusiastically welcomed two new board members in January: Wendy Rothman and Leslie Granger. Learn about Wendy and Leslie below.

We also reluctantly accepted the resignation of Peg Toledo, who has served on the Board since 2022. As an attorney, Peg was extremely helpful in reviewing legal issues and documents. Peg has started a new Mediation business based in California, and we wish her much success.



Wendy Rothman

Wendy Rothman, PhD, was born and raised in New York City but quickly embraced the “country life” when she bought her home in Bridgewater in 2016. She fell in love with the woods and trails and the special connectivity of a smaller community.

Professionally, Wendy has spent over 3 decades as an Organizational and Personality psychologist - a sought after interpreter of complex behavioral testing, used for Executive Selection and Performance Coaching in companies of all sizes from startups to Fortune 50s known around the world.

Wendy also brings nonprofit board leadership, having served for six years as President of the Jazz Power Initiative, a 501(c)(3) whose mission is to bring music education to students in communities where budgets have been slashed and programs cut.

Wendy can often be spotted around town with Pucci, her standard poodle, but you may not see her much in August. That's harvest time for her enormous tomato garden, when Wendy makes her famous "Glamorous Gardener Sauce Boss" tomato sauce. And while she continues to go back to the city for some bright light entertainment, Bridgewater is where she considers home.



Leslie Granger

Leslie Granger is a seasoned nonprofit executive with more than two decades of leadership experience advancing mission-driven organizations. She currently serves as President and CEO of Bideawee, one of the nation's oldest animal welfare organizations, where she provides strategic vision, operational oversight, and fundraising leadership to support lifesaving programs and long-term sustainability.

Leslie's personal and professional life illustrate her deep love of music, nature, animals, and food. At home in Bridgewater, since 2022, when not cooking or playing piano, Leslie can be found exploring, by bike or foot, the town's farms, open spaces, and woodsy trails. She lives with her musician husband, Phil, their two rescue dogs, and two old rescue kitties.

Through her time on the marketing and events committee of the BWLT, Leslie has come to understand the critical role land conservation plays in protecting ecosystems and preserving rural character. She is honored to join the Land Trust board and looks forward to contributing her nonprofit leadership and fundraising experience in service of safeguarding Bridgewater's natural resources for generations to come.

Make The Most of Winter *Winter Hiking Has Its Appeal*

New England winter days may be short and cold, but winter hiking offers powerful physical and mental health benefits from improved fitness and mood to a stronger immune system, reduced stress, and relief from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

The BWLT is offering a Winter Hiking Challenge, and it's not too late to sign up! Details are below. The goal is simple: motivate one another to brave the cold, get outside, and maintain healthy habits throughout the winter months.

On January 1st, we hosted a group of 25 "First Day" hikers who went tromping through the snow to start the New Year on the right foot, a perfect example of the spirit of this challenge.



Bridgewater hikers on New Year's Day

FIELD NOTES

Trees Planted In Memory of Bob Mnuchin

Bridgewater resident Bob Mnuchin passed away on December 19th, 2025. Bob was our neighbor on Northrop Street and we had many occasions to work together. He was by our side as a lover of trees and nature. The BWLT has secured a thicket of 10 trees to be planted in his honor in a forest of need.



Welcome Smita Bandyopadhyay

Smita has joined our volunteer Outreach Team. Born and raised on the Upper West Side of New York City, she long considered herself a true city girl. But after splitting her time between Bridgewater and the city for the past four and a half years, Bridgewater has won her heart. A dedicated educator, Smita has been teaching for 23 years. She loves to travel, dance, and most of all, bring people together.



Volunteer Opportunity

Do you have a green thumb? Or at least enjoy working in the garden? We are looking for volunteers to help maintain and pick vegetables at our community garden plots this coming season. Our bounty will be donated to the Bridgewater Food Pantry. If you can spare 1 hour every 1-2 weeks during the growing season let us know. Contact Alison at alison@bridgewaterlandtrust.org

Be Bear Aware This Winter

Connecticut bears enter a vital winter dormancy, but they are not completely out of commission and can be active. The three bears pictured here have a "den" near Tappen Brook trails. They are often sleeping, but also are actively walking and exploring the hillside.



UPCOMING/RECENT EVENTS

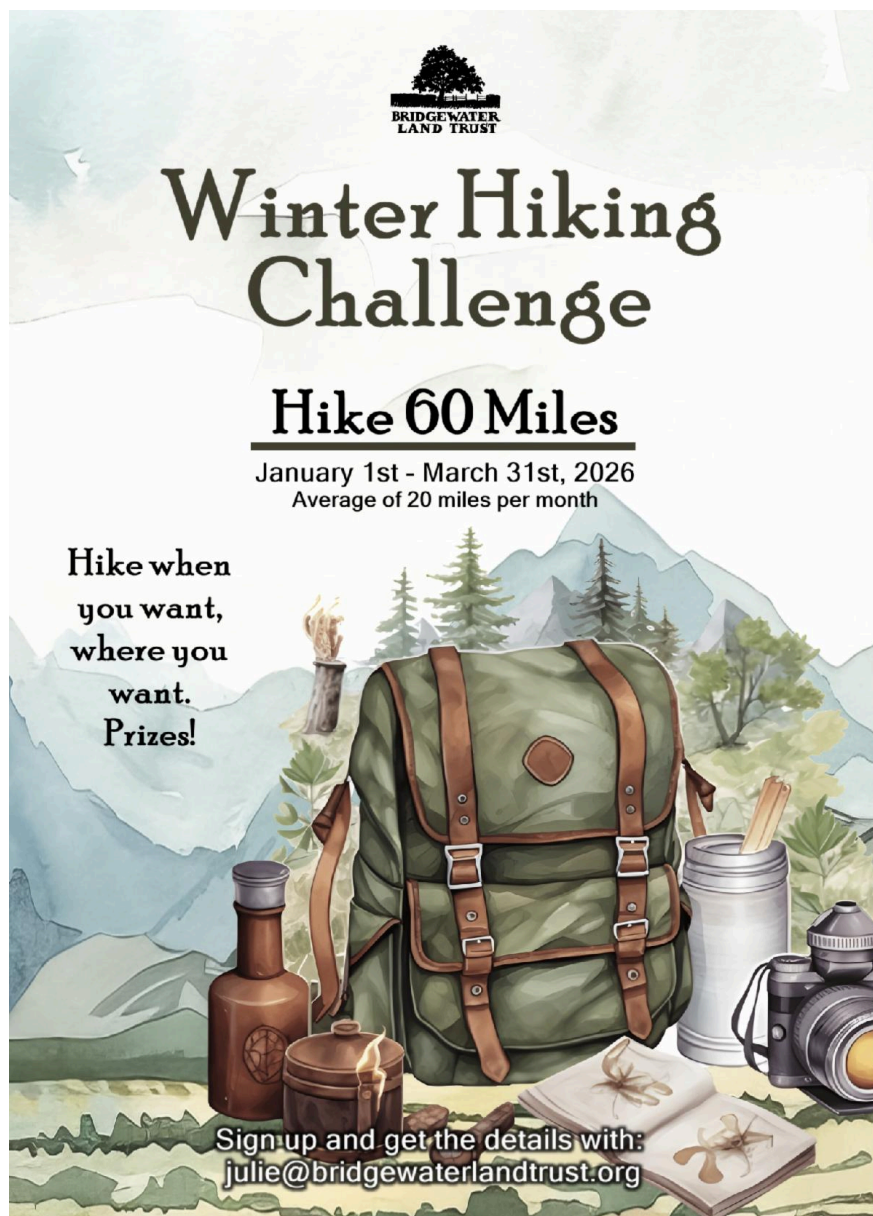
Winter Hiking Challenge

January-March, 2026

Hit the trails whenever and wherever you like. Walk, hike, run, or snowshoe at your own pace. Track your miles on your own and check in at the end of each month to celebrate your progress.

All participants who complete 60 miles will earn a special treat, and there will be extra prizes for standout achievements along the way!

Sign up with Julie at julie@bridgewaterlandtrust.org



Bridgewater: A Century Ago

Join us on a visual journey through Bridgewater: A Century Ago. Following the presentation we will host a wine and cheese reception. RSVP is required as space is limited.



Spring Patio Party

Celebrate The First Day of Spring

We'll welcome the first day of spring with an extraordinary happy hour at Italia Mia Restaurant in the Patio Room. Your ticket includes one complimentary drink, unlimited pizza and appetizers, a festive party favor, and door prize swag bags.

You can also purchase tickets at the event for chances to win a variety of well appointed raffle ensembles prepared by our Outreach Team. Special thanks to: Lisa Antel, Smita Bandyopadhyay, Helaina Buzzeo, Cynthia Feuer, Leslie Granger, Phillipa Malkin, Mae Orkisz, and Alisha Strother for their creative guidance and generous contributions.

Event tickets are available on our website.

Purchase Tickets Here



CELEBRATE THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING

SPRING PATIO PARTY

DOOR PRIZES
RAFFLE PRIZES
PARTY FAVORS



**THURSDAY, MARCH 19
5 PM - 7 PM**

Italia Mia Restaurant
223 Danbury Road, New Milford

TICKETS: \$30
INCLUDES ONE DRINK
PIZZA & APPETIZERS

TICKETS CAN BE PURCHASED AT BRIDGEWATERLANDTRUST.ORG
QUESTIONS CONTACT ALISON BIRKS AT ALISON@BRIDGEWATERLANDTRUST.ORG

Support Us

The Bridgewater Land Trust is a federally recognized 501(c) (3) charitable organization, and all your contributions are tax deductible.

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Stay Social

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