

PROMOTING THE PATH

Posted on: 02/23/09

Spotlight Newspapers

email: news@spotlightnews.com



Trail ambassador Howard Halstead shows a map of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail to a trail user in September.

The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and Parks & Trails NY are seeking volunteers to serve as ambassadors in the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program. Launched in Niskayuna in late August, the program is expanding this year to include patrols along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Trail in Schenectady, Rotterdam, Colonie and Cohoes.

“We want to promote the trail and encourage people to use it,” said Gillian Scott, president of the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail.

The role of trail ambassador is three-fold. Trail ambassadors exist to assist and inform trail users, monitor the trail and its conditions, and promote courtesy, safety and awareness of the trail.

“The volunteers go out, and we go out pretty much on our own time; there’s no schedule,” said Scott.

Last year during the program’s two-month pilot, 10 volunteers signed up to patrol sections of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in Niskayuna with financial support from L.L. Bean. The ambassadors logged a total of 58 patrols, with 166 contacts with trail users. They also provided assistance information to trail users. Examples of assistance include giving directions to a cyclist who had a broken stem to a bike shop, giving general directions for the trail, trail information, trail distances and maps. Ambassadors also told people where the nearest bathrooms were, provided historical information about the trail, and handed out bandages and disinfectant to the injured.

“The idea came about basically because I have some friends who are big ski ambassadors, and I’ve been active in the Canalway Trails Association, as well as promoting the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and lot of that seemed to me like people don’t even know that the trail exists in their backyard,” said Howard Halstead, a trail ambassador.

“I thought it would be beneficial to have folks who are out there who understand the trail, who know what sorts of things are nearby the trail,” said Halstead.

He said that the concept, from his perspective, is education of the trail. He said that he does not want trail ambassadors to be viewed as the police of the trail because they're not, but he does want them to be observant of the good things and bad things they come across.

"For instance, if there was a tree that had come down in a storm, we make sure we let the right municipalities know. We don't expect the trail ambassadors to do that themselves," said Halstead.

He said that the other thing he emphasizes with trail ambassadors is that this isn't expected to be a regiment; he doesn't want volunteers to feel like they have to go to work.

"It's that you yourself are a trail user and you're already educated in the area. ... You can be a resource to the fellow trail users," said Halstead.

Volunteers are encouraged to sign up for times when they would normally be on the trail anyway. Halstead, for example, said that he is on the trails on most Mondays, so that's when he signed up to volunteer his time.

The expansion of the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program will be funded in part with grants from the Schenectady County chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club and a grant from assemblyman Bob Reilly, D-Newtonville.

For information on the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program, or to volunteer to become an ambassador in 2009, contact volunteer coordinator Gillian Scott at 372-8478 or e-mail adklookout@verizon.net.

"All that matters is that you're a trail user who wants to further the education of others about this wonderful resource that we have and that you're really an advocate of the trail," said Halstead.

You can contact news@spotlightnews.com with any questions. Also, feel free to post comments below.

PROMOTING THE PATH

Posted on: 02/23/09

Spotlight Newspapers

email: news@spotlightnews.com



Trail ambassador Howard Halstead shows a map of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail to a trail user in September.

The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and Parks & Trails NY are seeking volunteers to serve as ambassadors in the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program. Launched in Niskayuna in late August, the program is expanding this year to include patrols along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Trail in Schenectady, Rotterdam, Colonie and Cohoes.

"We want to promote the trail and encourage people to use it," said Gillian Scott, president of the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail.

The role of trail ambassador is three-fold. Trail ambassadors exist to assist and inform trail users, monitor the trail and its conditions, and promote courtesy, safety and awareness of the trail.

“The volunteers go out, and we go out pretty much on our own time; there’s no schedule,” said Scott.

Last year during the program’s two-month pilot, 10 volunteers signed up to patrol sections of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in Niskayuna with financial support from L.L. Bean. The ambassadors logged a total of 58 patrols, with 166 contacts with trail users. They also provided assistance information to trail users. Examples of assistance include giving directions to a cyclist who had a broken stem to a bike shop, giving general directions for the trail, trail information, trail distances and maps. Ambassadors also told people where the nearest bathrooms were, provided historical information about the trail, and handed out bandages and disinfectant to the injured.

“The idea came about basically because I have some friends who are big ski ambassadors, and I’ve been active in the Canalway Trails Association, as well as promoting the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and lot of that seemed to me like people don’t even know that the trail exists in their backyard,” said Howard Halstead, a trail ambassador.

“I thought it would be beneficial to have folks who are out there who understand the trail, who know what sorts of things are nearby the trail,” said Halstead.

He said that the concept, from his perspective, is education of the trail. He said that he does not want trail ambassadors to be viewed as the police of the trail because they’re not, but he does want them to be observant of the good things and bad things they come across.

“For instance, if there was a tree that had come down in a storm, we make sure we let the right municipalities know. We don’t expect the trail ambassadors to do that themselves,” said Halstead.

He said that the other thing he emphasizes with trail ambassadors is that this isn’t expected to be a regiment; he doesn’t want volunteers to feel like they have to go to work.

“It’s that you yourself are a trail user and you’re already educated in the area. ... You can be a resource to the fellow trail users,” said Halstead.

Volunteers are encouraged to sign up for times when they would normally be on the trail anyway. Halstead, for example, said that he is on the trails on most Mondays, so that’s when he signed up to volunteer his time.

The expansion of the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program will be funded in part with grants from the Schenectady County chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club and a grant from assemblyman Bob Reilly, D-Newtonville.

For information on the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program, or to volunteer to become an ambassador in 2009, contact volunteer coordinator Gillian Scott at 372-8478 or e-mail adklookout@verizon.net.

“All that matters is that you’re a trail user who wants to further the education of others about this wonderful resource that we have and that you’re really an advocate of the trail,” said Halstead.

You can contact news@spotlightnews.com with any questions. Also, feel free to post comments below.