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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Parks & Trails New York Announces 2015 Park & Trail Hero Award Winners

ALBANY, N.Y. – Parks & Trails New York, the leading statewide parks and trails advocacy organization, announces the winners of its biennial Park & Trail Hero Awards. The awards recognize the leadership, creativity, and donation of time, talent, and materials behind many of New York’s parks and trails.

“Volunteers, public officials, and non-profits across New York are the driving forces behind our state’s extensive network of trails and parkland but rarely do these individuals and organizations receive the recognition they so richly deserve. We are pleased to honor these efforts with our 2015 Park & Trail Hero Awards,” said Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Robin Dropkin.

Parks & Trails New York will host an Award Ceremony on Wednesday, June 10 at 11:00 am in Albany.

The Park & Trail Hero Awardees for 2015 are:

#### Public Leadership

- *Mark Poloncarz*, Erie County Executive, for his commitment to restoring and enhancing the 10,000-acre Erie County Park System.  
County Executive Poloncarz has devoted considerable time, effort, and almost \$10 million in financial support to the redevelopment and rejuvenation of the extensive Erie County Park System. A significant component of his support has come from the negotiation of partnerships among community stakeholders and the development of a sense of collective ownership and pride among park users.
- *Cheryl Longyear*, Montezuma Town Historian, for being a passionate community organizer and spearheading the development of a trail system in the Montezuma Heritage Park.  
Ms. Longyear has dedicated a significant amount of professional and personal time and effort to develop funding, community support, and a vision for the Montezuma Heritage Park. Her work has led to an attractive trail system residents and visitors use to bike, hike, walk, and learn about the Cayuga County town’s cultural and historical significance.

#### Volunteer Service

- *Caroline Wallach and Emma Hanratty* for their innovative and sustained effort to recruit volunteers to restore and maintain the culturally- and historically-significant Jay Heritage Center.

Ms. Wallach and Ms. Hanratty are co-founders of the Preservationists of Jay Heritage Center, which has been responsible for undertaking several important maintenance and community outreach events to engage volunteers to beautify the historic site's grounds in Westchester County. Their work has allowed the Jay Heritage Center to fulfill its mission to educate visitors about the historical significance of the site.

- *Kay Cynamon* for her dedication to Taconic State Park and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference through the countless volunteer hours she has spent maintaining and mapping miles of trails in the Mid-Hudson Valley.

As a volunteer, Ms. Cynamon has spent the past 15 years maintaining and building several miles of trail in Taconic State Park, advocating and promoting trails in the region, and producing a map of trails in the South Taconic region.

### **Get Outdoors**

- *Theresa Bowick* for her creative efforts to promote physical activity and trail use along Rochester's El Camino Trail through the development of the Conkey Cruisers program. Ms. Bowick is founder of the Conkey Cruisers Bicycling-to-Better-Health Voyage. This program has provided residents of Northeast Rochester with the tools and motivation to enjoy the El Camino Trail for recreational and health benefits. Her leadership role also includes coordinating clinical health services along the trail using student nurses.
- *Laura Clark* for organizing a series of snowshoe and trail races to ensure that people can enjoy their local parks and trails throughout the year.

For more than a decade Laura Clark has been organizing snowshoe running events in the Capital Region's Wilton Wildlife Preserve. As president of the Saratoga Stryders running club she started a summer 5k trail running series to encourage trail running in a community of road runners. These efforts have served as a way for people to enjoy their local parks and trails in ways they previously did not consider.

### **Outside the Box**

- *Rick Manning* for his countless visionary and creative contributions to Ithaca's parks and trails. A landscape architect, Mr. Manning has been involved with several projects that have enhanced the quality of life for residents of the many communities in which he has worked. In his hometown of Ithaca, he created the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative and led the efforts to rejuvenate the Ithaca Waterfront and historically-significant Stewart Park. Rick's long-term vision and unwavering perseverance drove the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative to completion. These qualities, along with an ability to foster enthusiasm and excitement in others, truly set him apart.

*Parks & Trails New York is the state's leading advocate for parks and trails, working since 1985 to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for use and enjoyment by all. Learn more at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).*

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