



# A Sense of Place

SPRING 2023

CRANDALL PRESERVE

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## MILESTONES:

*"Our children no longer learn how to read the great book of Nature from their own direct experience, or how to interact creatively with the seasonal transformations of the planet. They seldom learn where their water comes from or where it goes. We no longer coordinate our human celebration with the great liturgy of the heavens."* Wendell Berry

*"Outdoors we are confronted everywhere with wonders; we see that the miraculous is not extraordinary, but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread."* Wendell Berry

I love Wendell Berry's writing. At times when I'm despairing, I can always find a passage to put feelings into words. Berry calls it like he sees it, but he also leads with hope; and not the saccharine-laced *everything will be alright* hope, but the secure faith that the changes we make in our world matter. I like to think that what we do at the Westerly Land Trust matters; that our conservation work will impact the direct experiences of our children; that the fires of wonder and exploration will be lit within them, and perhaps reignited in us through this shared experience. The miraculous is all around us. Let's pause and take it in. Happy Spring.



Jennifer Fusco,  
*Executive Director*

## WELCOME KATE SMITH



After 22 years of regular trips to South County from their home in Walpole, Massachusetts, Kate and her husband Rich relocated to Westerly permanently in August 2022. They both found WLT's Coffee and Clearing Club (CCC) and started volunteering on a regular basis, stewarding land and trails. Kate also serves on WLT's Education and Program/Membership committees.

Kate, a retired RN, spent her career caring for people in the ICU, CCU and operating room. Just as she is in Westerly, Kate was entrenched in her Walpole community. She was a representative of the Annual Town Meeting for 10 years and on the Board of Directors for an assisted living facility, Pond Home, for six years, two of which she served as president. For 15 years, Kate exercised her sewing talents as the costumer at the Walpole Footlighters Playhouse; Rich helped with set construction.

## WELCOME STEPHANIE RAIA

Stephanie Raia and her husband Peter Appleby (a recent addition to CCC) built their summer home in Westerly in 2006, while living in Greenwich, CT. Then, during the early part of the pandemic, they made Westerly their full-time residence.

With a master's degree in urban planning from Columbia University, Stephanie worked for the City of New York, developing and running a low-income housing program.

Simultaneously, she volunteered with the Trust for Public Land, helping to create community gardens in depressed neighborhoods. She returned to Columbia University and earned a master's degree in social work, and ultimately established a private practice in New Canaan, working primarily with families touched by international and intercultural adoptions.

Stephanie learned about the Westerly Land Trust while vacationing in Weekapaug and attending a Farm Dinner. She is proud to be associated with WLT whose members are effective and inclusive stewards of land.



# PAUL MEYER DEDICATION

On a sunny and crisp Sunday in March, friends and family of Paul Meyer gathered at Avondale Farm Preserve to remember Paul, a pioneering member of CCC. Paul is known as “CCC’s First Steward,” and given that the Meyer family home was just a few steps from the Preserve, Paul’s garage became the first equipment storage facility. Paul took on the responsibility of taking care of the chainsaws and weed whackers that were used during the early CCC days. An engineer by trade, Paul was meticulous, detail-oriented, and practical, all skills which made him an integral part of the Land Trust’s stewardship program and a valuable member of the Board of Directors from 2005-2019. Paul was an essential figure in the Westerly Land Trust’s collaboration with the Hopkinton Land Trust on the Polly Coon Bridge, which connects Grills Preserve to Hopkinton’s Grills Wildlife Sanctuary. Without this bridge, our community would not be able to enjoy over 1,000 continuous acres of woods, riverfront, and hiking trails. In addition, Paul spent many hours on improvements to the Industrial Trust building, which is still a part of WLT’s Urban holdings.



More than 30 people attended the ceremony, including Paul’s wife Joan, their sons and their respective families. Dick Holliday, Dave Prigmore, Sheila Beattie and Gene Renz, longtime friends of Paul’s, shared tales of Paul’s character and contributions to the Land Trust.

We hope visitors to Avondale Farm Preserve’s trails will stop to remember Paul and his many contributions to the Westerly Land Trust.



# BARLOW NATURE PRESERVE FARM STAND

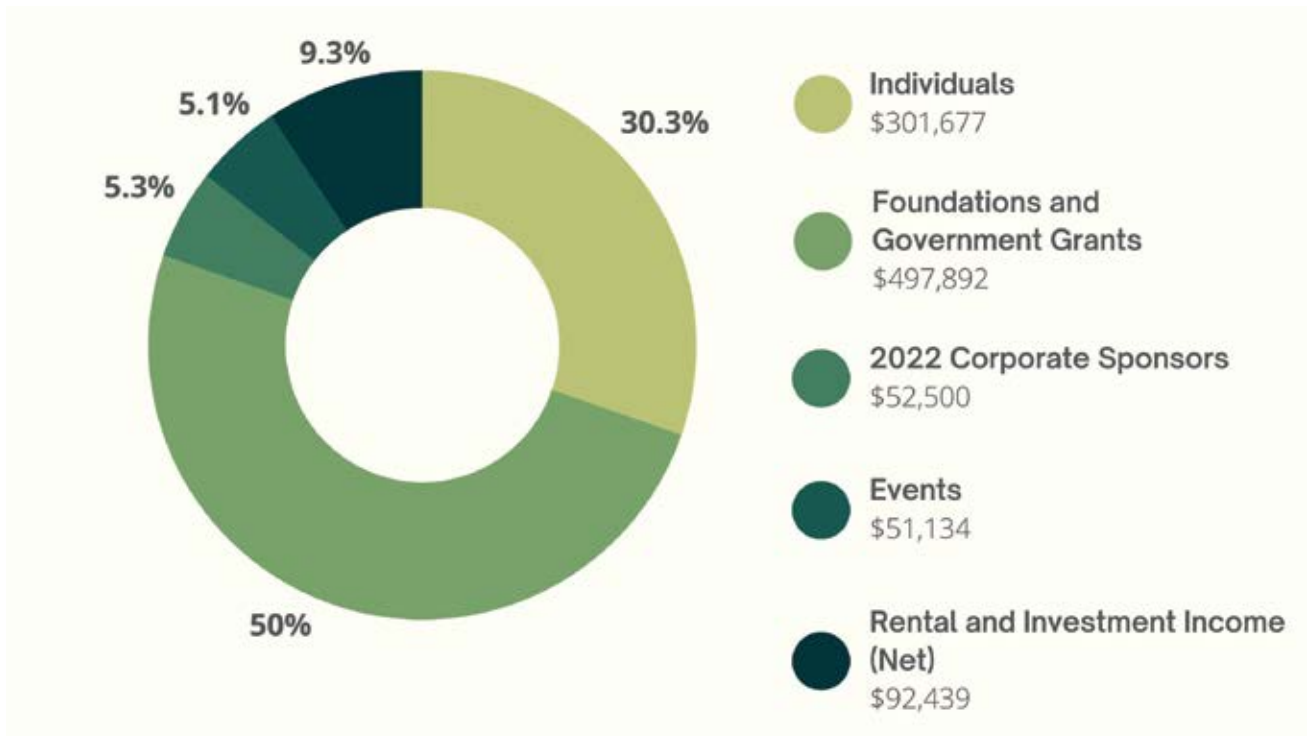


After hearing from our farming community, the Westerly Land Trust has retired the downtown Farmers Market as in years past. Many of the participating farmers have indicated that their individual farm stands are thriving, so we, too, will focus our efforts on promoting the Barlow Nature Preserve’s farm stand operated by Frontier Farm and Echo Rock Flowers. Join us at 449 Westerly-Bradford Road on Thursdays and Fridays from 3-6pm (Opening Day TBD) to shop for fresh produce and beautiful flowers, all grown just steps away from the farm stand. We are proud to support all of our local farmers and connect our community with nutritious food. For a list of local farms, check [farmfreshri.org](http://farmfreshri.org).

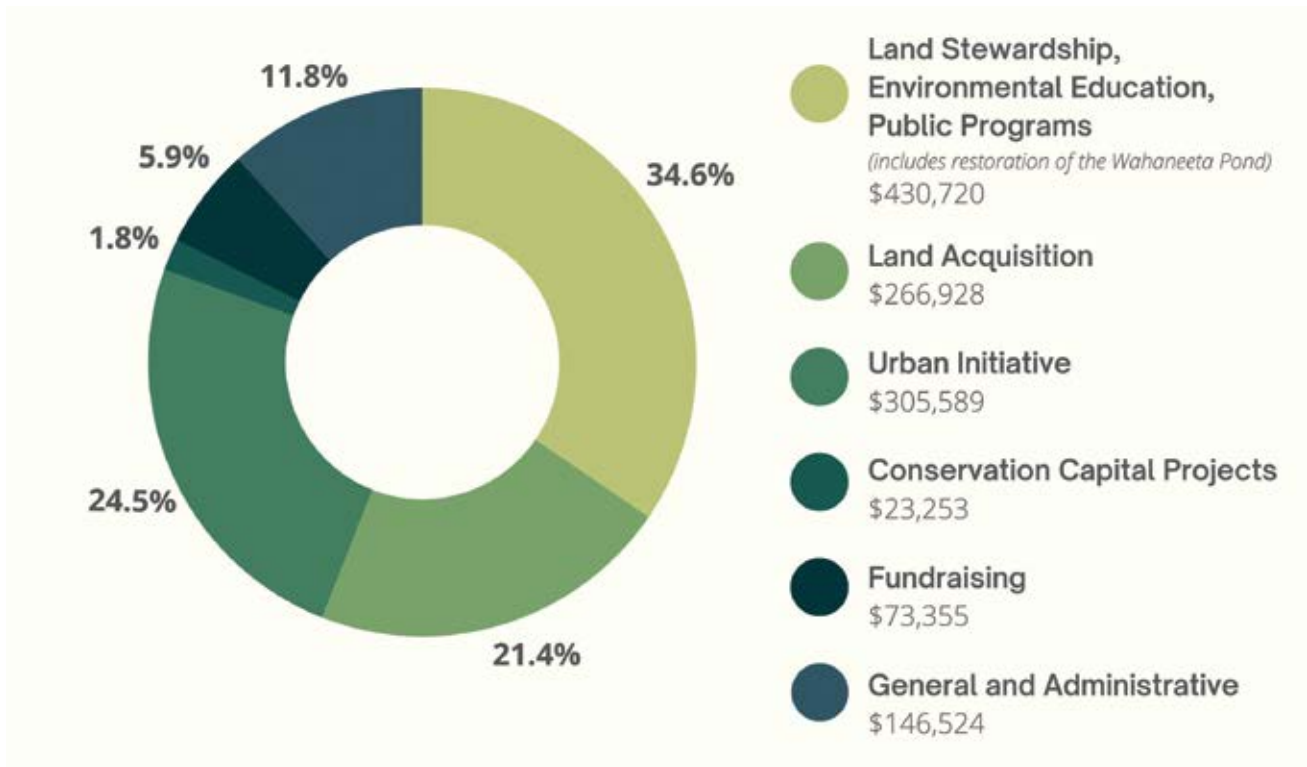


401Gives, Rhode Island’s Statewide Day of Giving, powered by United Way of Rhode Island, takes place annually on 4/01, a date cleverly inspired by the state’s area code. This year, our community donated \$11,000 to Westerly Land Trust’s conservation efforts. Across the state, more than \$3 million was raised for all participating nonprofits. We at the Westerly Land Trust are humbled by your support. Thank you for signaling how much you value local land conservation and environmental programming!

# WLT 2022 REVENUE



# 2022 AT A GLANCE



*“There are so many reasons to feel good about supporting Westerly Land Trust. Think about the many trails you’ve explored with family and friends. Perhaps you have a plot in the Community Garden or have attended a talk at Barlow by a leading environmental scientist or the annual farm dinner at Avondale. Maybe you’re inspired by what the Trust is accomplishing in getting Westerly students out into nature. Jane and I are happy to lend a hand in supporting all of this good work that enriches our lives and so many others.” ~ David Hannon*

# THANKS to our 2022 SUPPORTERS

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*"Like so many others who happily live here, I care deeply about our town and am so grateful to call it home. It gives me peace knowing that the Westerly Land Trust exists and works so tirelessly to protect our land and preserve the beautiful treasure that Westerly is." ~ Tara Whelan*



# THANKS to our 2022 SUPPORTERS

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*“Avondale is like a cathedral of nature. The care that WLT takes to preserve the essence of naturalness, whether it’s the little round-about to the bee center or the path through the high bushes challenged by the red-wing blackbirds - it is all magical. It would not be so special if it were not for the regular mowing and care you provide.*

*~ Peter Bartol*

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2022 Farm Dinner

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2022 Farm Dinner



## THESE OLD WOODS

Derived from the Greek word *phaino*, meaning “to show or to bring to light,” phenology is the study of how biological life cycles are affected by time and their environments. Life reveals itself over the hours, days, seasons, and years. Think of this in terms of what we observe in the early days of spring-- green growth emerges from yesterday's lifeless ground, leafless canopies swell with buds, and the shrill, metallic blackbird calls bounce across the marshes. Seasons drive annual changes, but so do the passing years and decades. These are often harder to observe, let alone quantify, but are equally worthy of study and reflection. You'll find that the passing of time is marked by different manifestations of life: what is present on the landscape that was or wasn't 10, 20, 50 years ago? When do the blackbirds arrive, when do the buds break and where have some of our people gone?

It's likely we have all observed the time-induced changes around and within us, but each year and season there is the opportunity to dive infinitely deeper, to discover something new about the relationship between life and time. For me, this is the hallmark of studying nature-- unlimited opportunity for discovery. Each spring, every season, every day, we can make new observations. That mullein in your garden that produced a 3-foot-tall tower of yellow flowers last summer: did you notice its lamb's ears rosette nestled on the ground the year before? If not, look closely this year. Or how about those blueberries you picked last August? Did you catch the dainty dangling white flowers' pistil swell? Well, this summer you can.

And you don't have to start at the beginning to watch the changes. That is the beauty of cycles and circles – no beginning or end. Just hop in whenever your eye catches something new, nose smells something different or ears hear a new song. And now you'll know the fancy word for what you are doing – phenology.

Marc Doherty, Land Stewardship Manager



## NO MOW MAY: IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

No Mow May, the practice of letting your lawn grow during the month of May, began in England as a way to provide pollinators with extra nutrition before the vibrant summer bloom. The Westerly Land Trust will participate in No Mow May this year at the Barlow Nature Preserve.

### Before you kick your lawnmower to the curb, here are some things to consider:

- Look into your town's ordinances. Some towns enforce lawn maintenance.
- Is your mower equipped to cut back a month's worth of growth? It may take a few passes at different blade heights.
- Many lawns are filled with particularly weedy species that can get out of hand.

### If you are interested in helping pollinators, but a bit shy about keeping your mower locked up for a full month, try these alternatives:

- Try Mow Less May: Only cut your lawn once every other week instead of every week. This will still allow some plants to flower.
- Creating a well-maintained border or buffer zone around your tall grasses will make the additional growth look tidy and intentional.
- Plant your own pollinator garden with native plants.
- Reduce or eliminate pesticides and fertilizers.

At the Westerly Land Trust, we are making plans for how best to manage our grassy areas, particularly at the Barlow Nature Preserve. We

will be experimenting by letting our grasses grow in particular areas to demonstrate the difference, while keeping a careful eye on invasive species and removing them as necessary. We are also planting a beautiful pollinator garden full of native plants, which will flower at different times to provide forage for pollinators in several seasons.

Consider what's right for you, and remember, even small changes in our daily lives can help pollinators thrive.





## VOLUNTEER CORNER: ALLISON MURPHY

Growing up in North Salem, NY, Allison Murphy dreamed of one day living by the ocean. She made this dream a reality in 2021, when she moved to Westerly from Westchester County, NY, after retiring from 35 years of teaching middle and high school Health and Science.

Allison discovered the Westerly Land Trust by typing “farming + yoga” into her search bar. She joined the WLT volunteer force in September 2021 and quickly became one of our most versatile volunteers: Allison stewards trails and land with CCC, leads outdoor youth education programs, and chairs WLT’s newly formed *Wellness in the Woods* committee.

Allison’s interest in the healing aspects of nature, specifically agriculture, blossomed in her younger years. “I grew up on whole plant foods, and my father farmed by the cycles of the moon.” Her mother taught her to pay attention to how food made her body feel. Today, Allison continues her practice as a Science-based Health Coach, certified in plant nutrition counseling, yoga, and mediation ([allisonmurphyhealthcoach.com](http://allisonmurphyhealthcoach.com)). She aspires to grow her own food at her new home in Charlestown to further connect to the land. “I am the land,” she says. “I’m not just living on the planet; I am the planet. I am able to breathe and stay alive because of what is going on in oceans and rainforests across the world.”

About her new life here in Westerly, Allison says, “I’m fulfilling all of my desires in retirement!” She hikes most days of the year, hones her writing craft through various classes, researches, reads, cooks, bikes and swims, and loves to dance and sing. Best of all, she is much closer to her daughter, Molly, 28, who also lives in Rhode Island.

The Westerly Land Trust is thankful to have Allison and all the positive energy she brings to our land and our programs.



## BOARDWALK AT GRILLS PRESERVE

Westerly Land Trust’s group of dedicated volunteers, the CCC, spent much of the fall and winter hard at work on a new boardwalk at Grills Preserve. Hop on the orange trail, cruise through sandy pine barrens and oak uplands, head downhill from the aptly named glacial erratic, “Big Rock,” and you will approach a small pocket wetland lined with sweet-pepper bush and white cut grass. Keep your boots clean on the 150-foot boardwalk along the edge of the wetland, sending frogs plopping back into the open water. There is something magical about being able to creep silently over wet ground, keeping your eyes up and alert for the turtle on the log, darting dragonflies and perhaps the chance to sneak near a wading wood duck.

While this boardwalk is simple in design, presenting less of an engineering challenge than the truss bridges at Wahaneeta, nothing was simple about the installation – the

mud, roots and water made sure of that. Add in a couple twists, turns and “bonus” sections and this project was anything but a breeze. A well-executed boardwalk needs stable footings, strong frames, proper clearance and many, many treads. Nice details include gentle, solid ramps on and off the boardwalk and finely angled treads matching the radius of each turn.

We are grateful to have a resilient, committed and highly skilled group of volunteers – cheers to the Building Crew on another job well done!



## CLEAN-UP CREWS AND BREWS

On Saturday, April 22, more than 50 dedicated volunteers pitched in to pick up trash from roads surrounding several Westerly Land Trust properties as a part of Clean-Up Crews and Brews, an annual WLT Earth Day event which concluded at Grey Sail Brewing of Rhode Island. Volunteers were rewarded for their hard work with a free tasty beverage of their choice. This year, the Westerly Land Trust partnered with the Sugar Kelp Cooperative who kicked off their New England Kelp Harvest Week ([newenglandkelp.com](http://newenglandkelp.com)) on the same day, so many volunteers chose the kelp-infused cocktail produced by South County Distillers and Stonington Kelp Company.

In total, volunteers removed 340 pounds of litter from Westerly roads. Thank you to all who help keep our town and our natural environment clean on Earth Day and every day.



## VOICES OF THE LAND

*Voices of the Land*, originally a podcast conceived by the Westerly Land Trust's first TerraCorps member Joe Barnes to engage our community during the pandemic, has grown into an in-person lecture series featuring people with deep connections to the land, including farmers, biologists, beekeepers and the like.



Since February 2023, Westerly Land Trust members have enjoyed the following discussions, one occurring each month:

- *Invasive Species in Rhode Island Forests* led by University of Rhode Island's Dr. Lisa Tewksbury
- *Southern Rhode Island Bobcat Study* led by University of Rhode Island's research associate Amy Mayer (pictured here)
- *Working to Conserve our Native Amphibians & Reptiles* led by state herpetologist Dr. Scott Buchanan
- *Trends of the Rhode Island Osprey Nest Locations* led by Audubon Society of Rhode Island's East Bay Refuge Manager Lincoln Dark

These discussions are free to all Westerly Land Trust members, but registration is required. For upcoming lectures, please visit [westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar](http://westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar).

Need even more science? Check out the new page on our website **Scientists & Stewards** (under the Connect and Enjoy tab) which features people who are doing interesting and important work specifically on Westerly Land Trust property.

## TRAILS APP UPDATE

Since we launched WLT's Trails App in 2019, more than 3,500 people have downloaded it to access our trail maps complete with GPS tracking, as well as our calendar of events and important information.

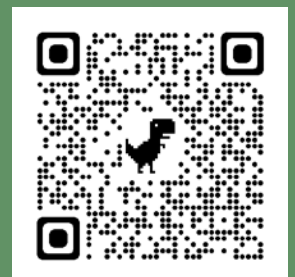
The Trails App is no longer being supported by its original platform, so we optimized our website for mobile use. This means you will still have GPS-powered trail maps and our active calendar of events right at your fingertips.

To access, simply type [westerlylandtrust.org](http://westerlylandtrust.org) into your

mobile browser. For WLT trail maps, touch the "Trail Maps" icon in the lower right corner. As with the Trails App, you'll need Google Maps downloaded on your phone.

For even easier access, save the WLT website as an icon on your phone's home screen, just like an app. For instructions, scan the QR code on this page or contact us at 401-315-2610. We are happy to help!

Also, we invite you to sign up for our email list by visiting [www.bit.ly/WLTenews](http://www.bit.ly/WLTenews) and to follow us on Facebook and Instagram (@westerlylandtrust). We will always keep your information private.



# LIVING LABORATORIES

As the 2022-2023 academic year winds down, we are proud to report that thanks to our partnership with Westerly Public Schools, 211 K-4th graders visited Westerly Land Trust properties for our engaging outdoor afterschool program *Living Laboratories* in the fall semester, and we are on track to host another 244 students by the end of the spring semester. Additionally, before summer, we'll extend our reach beyond Westerly to welcome 64 middle schoolers from St. Michael School in Pawcatuck for an outdoor career day and 95 third graders from Richmond Elementary School for a lesson on the importance of pollinators. Our education program strives to inspire the next generation of conservationists and would not be possible without our tremendous community support.



## GUIDE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE: FAMILY FUN IN NATURE

The Westerly Land Trust recently released a series of DIY projects thoughtfully curated to add just a bit of structure to your family's outdoor adventures. For the full list of projects and other environmental education resources for families, please use your smart phone to scan the QR code on this page. Below is just one example:



### TEXTURE SCAVENGER HUNT: DISCOVER THE UNIQUE TEXTURES OF THE WORLD AROUND YOU!

**Materials:** Paper, crayons, and nature

#### Step 1: Explore and Collect

Explore nature and find objects with varying textures. Leaves, pinecones, and tree bark have beautiful natural patterns.

#### Step 2: Create Art

Once you've found the textures you want to use to create your masterpiece, lay your objects on a hard surface and place a piece of paper on top. Gently rub the side of a crayon over the paper and watch the colorful pattern take shape.

#### Step 3: Repeat and Conserve

To conserve paper, create multiple rubbings on the same sheet. You can experiment by overlapping different textures to create a new pattern.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Scan the QR Code to the right for our full calendar.



### Historic Cemetery Tours

**May 16, 20 and 23** There are nearly 90 historic burial grounds in Westerly, five of which are on Westerly Land Trust properties. Through this series, you will learn the interesting history of those who lived here before us. The last tour will bring back a fad from the past: a picnic at the cemetery! To find out more and to register, please visit [westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar](http://westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar).

### Forest Bathing (Wellness in the Woods)

**May 27, June 3, fall dates coming soon** Deepen your connection with nature on a gentle and mindful walk through the woods, led by Certified Forest Therapy Guide Dr. Deirdre O'Connor. For more information and to register please visit [westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar](http://westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar).

### Wellness in the Woods with BarreCoast

**May 21, June 21, July 15, August 19, September 23, October 14** The Westerly Land Trust/ BarreCoast partnership is expanding to offer WLT members more than just yoga on the preserves. We're adding meditation classes and boot camp to our outdoor wellness repertoire. For information and to register, please visit [westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar](http://westerlylandtrust.org/events-calendar).

### Bloomin' Brunch

**Mid to late June, depending on the blooms** We'll keep an eye on the forecast, but it is up to Mother Nature to schedule this hike! Stay tuned... we'll let you know when and where we'll gather for the ultimate bloom-peeping hike followed by a tasty brunch.

### SAVE THE DATE! Farm Dinner, Winnapaug Farm Preserve

**Saturday, September 9** Last year's Farm Dinner was just about perfect, but we have a few new tricks up our sleeves for 2023. Stay tuned for more information about how you can reserve your seat at the longest table in Westerly as we celebrate our local farmers and chefs.

### WTAC's Wahaneeta Trail Race

**Saturday, September 23** Join the Westerly Track and Athletic club for their 8th Annual Wahaneeta Trail Race. For more information, please visit [westerlytrackclub.org](http://westerlytrackclub.org).