

2012 Volunteer of the Year Award

As presented by Sarah Koval at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 29, 2012.

The Volunteer of the Year Award has been presented since 1997 and was created to honor those who through their dedication and hard work have made an outstanding contribution to the success of New Hampshire Audubon and its work. This year's recipient is Bev Youree.

Bev is involved in almost every aspect of operations at the Massabesic Audubon Center (MAC). She can be called on to help in any event and has even started her own wildly successful event, run entirely by volunteers, called the Enchanted Fall Festival (EFF). The EFF introduces families to the natural wonders of the fall season and this will be its fifth year. Bev and her contingent of volunteers transform MAC into a fall wonderland. Families sign up for a 45 minute time slot and embark on a journey that takes them through different parts of the property. They begin at a campfire where they can roast marshmallows and hear stories about fall. Next is a live animal program where they learn about what happens to animals as fall wanes into winter. Next, guests are led into the barn where a gorgeous fall scene has been brought to life. Live bluegrass music is playing and kids get the opportunity to dance before walking through the "Enchanted Fall Forest". Lastly, the New Hampshire Storytellers Guild delights children with an exciting and lively fall story. In addition to the tours, the auditorium is set-up with live animal exhibits, games, drawings, face painting, and treats donated by MAC volunteers. It is an amazing event and all directed by Bev. Many children learn to associate fall and the animals portrayed around that time of year as scary, but Bev has done much to show them the beauty of the season. Much of the costs for EFF have come out of Bev's own pocket, spending hundreds of dollars on props, decorations, food, and promotional materials.

Last year Bev also spearheaded a program called "Passport to Adventure" in which children go on a scavenger hunt throughout Massabesic's property looking for clues, stamping their "passport", and learning natural history facts about each place they visit. For each passport they complete their name goes on the "Wall of Fame" and they are entered to win birdhouses and other prizes at the end of the season. It is a great way to get families outside together, look for clues in nature, and learn about all the great natural resource features we have at MAC. Bev makes each passport by hand (cutting, stapling, and assembling) and prints them at home so they can be in color. Much of this cost has come out of her own pocket as well!

Since Bev has been a volunteer at MAC she has volunteered over 325 days and 1,600 hours (which I know is wildly underestimated). Her tasks are varied and include Chair of the Enchanted Fall Festival, sitting on the education programming committees for holiday wreaths, Winterfest, pancake breakfast, and Earth Day, and volunteering for each of these events. She spends every Wednesday as a front desk volunteer greeting visitors, updating marketing websites, making promotional flyers and signs for upcoming events, and assisting in special projects. She has also done school programs, led groups on tours of the center and grounds, and helped with various camps. She is always willing to help out wherever needed. (Once she did a tour for the Lion's Club and talked them into buying MAC a brand new stove)!



Bev Youree (left) as she receives the 2012 Volunteer of the Year Award from Sara Koval. Photo by R.A. Quinn.

Before becoming our volunteer extraordinaire she was a teacher for over 40 years in California and Vermont. She retired from teaching to run a bed and breakfast in Vermont. She shares her life with her wonderful wife, Carol Nepton (also a volunteer), two grandsons, and a spirited labradoodle named Abby.

Education has been Bev's life mission. We are grateful that she has chosen to share her time and talents with New Hampshire Audubon in her "retirement" and share her love of nature with those who visit the Massabesic Audubon Center.