

## Earth Day Article

On Saturday, April 23, the Brookfield Conservation Commission hosted an Earth Day event at Eriksen Farm Open Space on Nabby Road in Brookfield. The event featured the planting of a native tree, birdhouse building, and information about the local Pollinator Pathway. In addition, the Conservation Commission kicked off their “No Mow May” campaign by handing out yard signs to participants. The “No Mow May” initiative encourages residents to not mow a section of their yard throughout the entire month of May to provide a temporary habitat for pollinators before the summer flowers begin to grow.

The highlight of the event was a ceremony unveiling Brookfield’s first ever barn quilt. Barn quilts are actually large wooden boards painted in the style of a quilt and hung on local barns. Barn quilts pay homage to a local area’s agrarian past and the actual quilts that are passed down throughout generations of farm families.

“I love the barn quilt trail in New Milford, and I always wanted Brookfield to do something similar,” said Marji Carmody, a member of the Conservation Commission. Marji Carmody first brought the idea to the commission over two years ago.

“I’m proud that this quilt represents a collaboration among several town departments and commissions,” said Jeff Bronn, Chairperson of the Conservation Commission. “We worked with the Arts Commission for the design and creation phases. The Public Works Department and Park and Rec Department helped with the hanging of the quilt. This was truly a group effort, but this quilt would not have been possible without the artistry and talents of Bridgit O’Hara from the Brookfield Arts Commission. We owe this all to her!”

Bridgit O’Hara, a local artist and member of the Brookfield Arts Commission, created the design for the quilt and then painted the two 4ft by 8ft boards that became the actual quilt. “When I visited Eriksen Farm last summer, I was inspired by the yellow finches that graced the property and all the wildflowers I saw. I loved the green walking trails that surround the property and I wanted to incorporate all of this into the design.” Bridgit volunteered several hours to the project last fall, and looks forward to helping with the creation of the town’s next barn quilt.

“There are many great locations around town where we can have barn quilts and I can’t wait to see more put up,” added Marji Carmody.

Eriksen Farm Open Space, where the event was held, is going to be part of a greater project by the Conservation Commission to remove an invasive plant species on the property. Knapweed, a highly invasive plant, has taken over much of the fields at the property in recent years.

The Conservation Commission spent the last two years researching the best and most eco-friendly means of removing the invasive plant on several of its properties. The plan for this year is to cut the knapweed several times on a section of the field throughout the growing season to prevent the plant from seeding itself.

The commission understands that this may result in a loss of some habitat for the pollinating insects and birds that visit the property. “Our biggest challenge is striking a balance between preservation and maintenance. We want to maintain our lands, but that often interferes with preservation efforts. For this project, we gathered input from many local experts on how we can best manage the removal of this invasive plant,” said Jeff Bronn.

To balance the potential loss of some habitat due to cutting of certain sections of field, the Conservation Commission plans to plant a 400 square foot pollinator garden on the property. The plan calls for the planting of native, pollinator-friendly plants and flowers to provide an additional haven on the property. The Conservation Commission is teaming with several local Master Gardeners and the Brookfield Garden Club to create the pollinator garden. Once completed, the garden can then become part of the greater local pollinator pathway that encompasses several of the local towns.



Jeff Bronn (Conservation Commission) and Bridgit O'Hara (Arts Commission)



Jeff Bronn (Conservation Commission), Bridgit O'Hara (Arts Commission), Julie Blick (Conservation Commission), Cheryl DePoi (Conservation Commission), Marj Carmody (Conservation Commission), Ashley Schutte-Bell (Conservation Commission) and Tony Cappiello (Conservation Commission)



Julie Blick and Tamara Schriefer plant a native Viburnum at Eriksen Farm at the Earth Day Event



Brookfield Conservation Commission Earth Day Event



Bridgit O'Hara painting the barn quilt