

Developing Pollinator Pathways at Beacon Schools

APRIL 2023



Holly O'Grady has been involved with a partnership project with Beacon's Conservation Advisory Committee and the Beacon City School District as a Cornell Climate Steward (CCS) volunteer since 2022. The project focuses on creating pollinator pathways at the elementary schools.

She had just recently moved to Beacon from New York City and found herself motivated to get involved and protect her new community's natural beauty. This led her to the CCS training program, which she completed in 2021, and to the pollinator pathways project soon after.

This project involves building pollinator pathway gardens at three elementary schools in Beacon School District, each consisting of a variety of native plants geared to attract pollinators, like bees and butterflies. The pathways have the double benefit of fostering more sustainable use of school land, which is currently dominated by grass lawns, while also protecting vulnerable pollinators. The pathways also offer educational opportunities to augment current gardening programs.



For Holly, the pollinator pathways have grown from what was supposed to be a simple 40-hour volunteer commitment to a passion project. Since she began, the work has grown in scope and personal significance, along with her commitment to see the project realized and keep the network of people involved engaged with one another. Holly's professional background in adult learning and leadership development provides her with a lens of team building and plan development for her project, which she describes as key aspects of this kind of community action.

She also emphasizes the clear purpose of the CCS program and how it attracts people who really want to be engaged and make a difference. The pollinator pathways, in Holly's words, "create an opportunity for people to dip their feet into community volunteering for a project they are passionate about."

Before volunteering for the CCS program, Holly's personal climate goals involved common ways of having a smaller footprint, such as living a walkable distance from town, weatherizing the house, and replacing the gas stove. After engaging in this work for some time, her connection to the pollinator pathways project has since influenced her to also become more thoughtful and involved with gardening and to learn about pollinators by connecting with experts.

As the initial planting phase approaches, the project's current focus is on finding cost-effective alternatives to ensure pollinator gardens' survival throughout the summer. Holly is committed to continuing work on the project and is looking forward to seeing how the pathways develop in the fall. Over the summer, the pollinator pathway team intends to test the efficacy of a meadow development technique using no-mow areas. This method is both less expensive and requires less attention. In addition, the project is looking into forming partnerships with other community organizations to provide pollinator conservation education.

Holly's work on the pollinator pathways project with the Beacon School District as a CCS volunteer highlights the power of community-driven initiatives in promoting sustainable practices and protecting our environment. By promoting sustainable land use and protecting pollinators, this project offers an opportunity for people to make a difference in their community while pursuing their passions. Holly's commitment to the project and her leadership skills demonstrate the potential for individuals to make positive change through community action.



The Cornell Climate Stewards Program trains volunteers on the science and solutions to climate change, so that they can support their communities with local climate action projects. For more information, visit the Cornell Climate Stewards website at <https://climatestewards.cornell.edu/>



***Lawns don't help the planet.
Pollinator Pathways* do.***

*Pollinator Pathways are a wildlife corridor providing habitat and nutrition for birds, bees, butterflies and other insects.

Pollinator pathways are coming this Spring!

Pollinator Pathways are coming to Forrestal Elementary School,
Glenham Elementary School, and Sargent Elementary School



*Developed by a partnership between Beacon's Conservation Advisory Committee and
the Beacon City School District. To learn more about pollinator pathways visit:
www.pollinator-pathways.org*

Interested in pollinator pathway volunteer opportunities
contact: h.ogradey.en@gmail.com