

NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Winter - Spring 2026



Volunteers helping feed Northwest Park's heritage livestock, and it's more of a love than a chore

If you've ever wandered near the upper pastures of Windsor's Northwest Park, you've heard it before you saw it. It's a literal symphony of farm life—the rhythmic lowing of cattle, the insistent bleating of goats, and a cheerful cacophony of clucking, gobbling, and quacking. It's a warm, noisy welcome that signals you've arrived at one of the park's most cherished features: our heritage breed livestock barn.

These aren't just any farm animals; they are a living link to New England's history. As Park Manager Theresa Nodine explains, "Heritage breeds are traditional livestock raised long before the era of industrial farming. These hardy animals were bred for their natural strengths, like the ability to forage and a grit that withstands our harsh winters. Today, our two Milking Shorthorn cattle, three Oberhasli goats, four Cotswold sheep, and the rest of the gang—including our famous miniature donkey, "Cisco"—represent vital genetic diversity that is becoming increasingly rare."

The Friends of Northwest Park (FNWP) have directly supported the care of these animals. Last spring FNWP helped the park obtain three of the four Cotswold sheep that were donated from a New York farm. The FNWP also provided special project funding and grant funds to support the updated signage in the Animal Barn which will debut in upcoming weeks.

Keeping this diverse family fed and happy is a true



Miniature donkey "Cisco" patiently waits will Volunteer Taplin puts fresh hay into his feeder. Cindy is just one of the corps of volunteers that augment the Northwest Park staff's care for its varied heritage livestock.

community effort. Northwest Park currently has a dedicated animal care team of 10 volunteers that augment the day staff providing evening, weekend and, if needed, occasional day-time feeding backup. These volunteers are backed up by four reliable alternates.

Whether it's a scheduled shift or an emergency fill-in, someone is always there, seven days a week. Our staff and volunteers ensure that no matter what—be it a

Continued on page 5

President's Corner

Another year is here and it's time to thank everyone who has supported Northwest Park — volunteers, donors, members, trustees and park staff. Without all this support very little of what we have accomplished would have been possible. Positive impacts have been made through educational outreach and engaging the public by:

- **seasonal wonders** — experiencing full moon hikes to “Wee Wanderers” winter series which includes hibernation, migration and neighborhood habitats; or witnessing a child showing excitement after discovering that an acorn is a seed that will grow into an oak tree!
- **cultural wonders and creative workshops** — facilitated by park staff and organizations such as the Nowashe Villages Traditional Foodways Program teaching about indigenous practices, plus workshops where participants create Yule Logs.
- **Coffee House Concert Series** — where all proceeds provide program scholarships for children.
- **outdoor recreation** — from cross country ski and snowshoe rentals, to searching the skies for a broader picture of our world, while utilizing 13 miles of the park's 11 varied trails, including a Sensory Saunter and Blind Trail.

Next on the calendar is maple sugaring season culminating with the Pancake Breakfast on March 21st. Come join us and keep in touch to see what's happening this year!

It is truly amazing how much passion so many have for the success of what Northwest Park is and has to offer. All together, we will continue to expand on sharing all the wonders of our world from our protected 473 acres. With great hope that everyone continues to share their talent, financial support and time towards a great future at Northwest Park, I am optimistically jumping into 2026.

*Terry Langevin, President
Friends of Northwest Park*

Support the *Friends of Northwest Park* through volunteering, membership and donations. Use this QR code to link to our Web site for more information.



Northwest Park's 2026

CONCERT SERIES

All concerts are held in the Great Room of the Nature Center at Northwest Park and begin at 7:30 pm. Doors open at 7 pm. Tickets can be purchased online at <https://northwestpark.com/concerts>, or reserved by calling the Nature Center at 860-285-1886.

Feb 21 Kala Farnham

Kala Farnham crafts contemporary folk songs with roots and wings, weaving age-old truths into modern grooves. Drawing on a background in classical piano, musical theater, and therapeutic sound, she offers a signature reinvention of the folk tradition—infusing fairytales, historical fiction, and narrative medicine into vivid portraits of the human experience. Her intimate, interactive performances—featuring soul-stirring vocals and mystical folk harp, piano, and guitar—invite listeners on a transcendent journey that lingers long after the final note fades.



Mar 7 Joe Carter Samba Rio Quarteto

When guitarist Joe Carter and his Samba Rio Quarteto hit the stage on March 7, the Northwest Park coffee house will transform into a lively Rio de Janeiro jazz club.



Apr 11 Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem

Prepare for a genre-blending hootenanny with Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem – a band that defies labels and lifts spirits wherever they play.



Apr 25 Porch Party Mamas

The Porch Party Mamas, a Boston-based sisterhood of singers that mixes folk, country, Celtic, and blues into a rollicking, heartwarming brew. These five women are all seasoned musicians.



Sponsored by *Friends of Northwest Park*

Educational and entertaining events sponsored by *Friends of Northwest Park*



Among the many educational events sponsored by the Friends of Northwest Park (FNWP) were (above clockwise): “*Story Hike: Into the Woods with Baba Yagas*”, presented by Brooke Ferguson & Katrina Sanyal – a journey through the forest, stopping along the way with creative invitations to learn and listen closely to Russian folktales and to the nature that was surrounding participants; “*Once Upon a River*,” presented by Cyril the Sorcerer, brought a family-friendly magic show, weaving tales of adventure, and showing us our responsibility to protect the environment; “*The Benefits of Cooking with Honey*” by Cathy Wolko of The Humble Bee Honey Company, defining how honey balances the palette of certain foods like marinades, barbecue sauces and hot sauces; “*Birds of Prey*”, a well-received presentation by Horizon Wings, an Ashford non-profit wildlife rehabilitation centers for birds of prey; and “*Northeast of the Woodland Period*” where educators from the Nowashe Village in South Windsor taught attendees about seasonal foods and what life looked like for the indigenous people of Connecticut.

Other educational programs included a children’s program given by The Humble Honey Bee Company which introduced young children to the “*Life of a Bee*”; “*Make Your Own Garden Amendments*,” learning

Meet the full and part-time staff who keep Northwest Park a place to go

Theresa Nodine, Park Manager

Terry has been part of the Town of Windsor team since 2016 and currently serves as Northwest Park manager. She was promoted into this role after several years as the park's Environmental Education Coordinator. Terry holds a Master's degree in Educational Curriculum and Instruction from UConn and is a CT-certified teacher with endorsements in Agricultural Education and Biology. She is passionate about connecting people with nature and providing programs that foster environmental learning and community stewardship.



Holly McCormick, Janitor

Holly has been an employee at the park for over 15 years! Her responsibilities are making sure the buildings on the grounds are clean and tidy for both staff and park guests. She also assists with various other tasks as needed. Holly enjoys working outdoors and meeting park visitors.



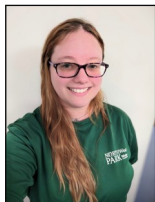
Charlie Stowers, Environmental Educator

As the new Lead Educator, Charlie teaches many of the park's educational programs, including our homeschool series and school field trips, Discovery Days, and community events. He also cares for the ambassador animals, updates Nature Center exhibits, and occasionally helps out at the Animal Barn. This summer, he'll serve as Camp Director for Camp Foxfire. In his free time, Charlie enjoys birding, drawing, painting, sculpting, and quilting. He calls his role at the park his dream job and is excited for what's ahead at NWP.



Jessica LaPolt, Environmental Education Supervisor

Jess was hired into the Environmental Education Supervisor position in March of 2025 after sharing her passion for nature at Northwest Park for nearly 3 years as a part-time Environmental Educator and Camp Foxfire Director. Her love for the field is fueled by witnessing her students' excitement as they grasp new concepts and gain a deeper understanding of the natural world. As a mother to an energetic 4-year-old son, Jess cherishes the opportunity to instill a love and respect for nature in future generations, both at home and at work.



Oliver Kelsey, Weekend Attendant/ Environmental Educator

Oliver is a full-time graduate student pursuing his MS in Biological Sciences with a focus on wildlife and conservation. He joined the park as a weekend desk attendant in August 2024, assisting visitors with questions and park needs. After serving as the Environmental Education Intern in summer 2025, he expanded into a programming role, supporting youth programs, leading Full Moon Hikes, and contributing to rotating Nature Center displays.



Magdalena Medrano, Administrative Aide (M-Tu)

Magdalena began working as an Administrative Aide at Northwest Park in August 2025. She supports the Nature Center office with clerical tasks and assists visitors in the gift shop. She loves seeing how much children and adults enjoy the Nature Center and the park, and she especially enjoys visiting the animals. Magdalena recently retired after more than 25 years as a secretary in the public school system.



Hana Fulwider, Animal Care Specialist

Originally from the Czech Republic, Hana grew up on a small farm with sheep, rabbits, ducks, pigs, and chickens, sparking her lifelong passion for animals. She earned a degree in Animal Science from the University of Life Sciences in Prague and has worked with dairy cattle and horses across both continents. Now residing in Granby with her husband, son, and a very opinionated senior miniature Schnauzer.



Molly Garrahy, Environmental Educator

Molly joined Northwest Park as an Environmental Educator in October 2025. She has jumped into teaching many of the educational programs including school field trips, the homeschool series, and Wee Wanderers. Before Northwest Park, Molly worked for the Connecticut State Parks in an environmental education role. She majored in Environmental Studies and Geography at Bucknell University, and says her goal as an educator is making nature accessible to all ages and backgrounds.



Heritage stock, continued from page 1

volunteer's illness or a planned vacation—the animals never miss a meal.

One of the familiar faces you'll find in the barn is Cynthia Taplin. A Windsor resident, Cynthia has been part of the feeding program for more than 15 years. Her journey started in a way many parents can relate to. "My kids were Northwest Park campers and later worked in the park. My 15-year-old son signed up to do the feeding." And she, too, soon became one of the volunteers.

For Cynthia, the bond with the animals is deeply personal. "They are like part of my animal family," she says, and that everyone has a soft spot for "Cisco" the donkey. He's a bit of a celebrity who knows when the volunteers arrive, even during off-hours. Cynthia talks to them all, and while some follow her voice faithfully, she jokes that Cisco's response usually "depends on his mood!"

But the benefits of the program flow both ways. For volunteers like Cynthia, the barn is a sanctuary from the hustle of daily life. She often stays long after the chores are done just to enjoy the quiet while the animals eat. On weekend mornings, you might find her enjoying a coffee and a bagel in the barn or catching a sunset after an evening shift. "NWP is an amazing treasure," she notes, "and being at the barn helps me remember to enjoy the park, too."

Another longtime feeder and Windsor resident is Elizabeth McAuliffe. She joined the team in 2019 and found herself unexpectedly drawn to the ducks and goats. For Elizabeth, the barn is a testament to the draw Windsor has for the entire region. She loves seeing families travel from out of town to introduce their little ones to the animals. She firmly believes in the "barn cure," noting that if you're having a hard day, just walking through the barn is enough to change your mood entirely.

Of course, the work isn't always easy. Because these animals are viewed as family, it is incredibly difficult for the volunteers when an animal falls ill or passes away.



Volunteer Liz McAuliffe gets some gentle nudging from Oberhasli goats as she tries to refill the goat's feeding trough.

However, that emotional investment is exactly what makes our livestock program so special. The animals depend on the volunteers, and in return, they provide a sense of purpose, peace, and connection to the land that is hard to find anywhere else.

The animal barn is home to a wonderful variety of feathered and furry friends. This incredible program thrives because of people like Cynthia and Elizabeth, and the continued generosity of our FNWP members. Next time you visit, keep an eye out for our diverse flock—each bird and beast has a story and a dedicated human helping them tell it.

While there are no current openings for new animal care volunteers, opportunities may arise as availability changes. Individuals interested in being considered for future openings are encouraged to complete the online interest form at <https://forms.gle/gFRrSFP3PpY4DrR67>. The Animal Care Specialist will contact those whose experience and availability best match our needs as positions become available.

Continued from page 3

from Master Gardeners how to grow healthier, mole disease-resistant and nutritious crops; and "*Foraging Fantastic, Delicious, Deadly, and Glowing Mushrooms*", a favorite at the park presented by The Three Foragers who led us through the fascinating underground world of the mushroom.

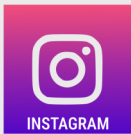
Upcoming — on February 15 will be "*Wings of Night*" presented by Horizon Wings, with live owls and highlighting their nocturnal lives. In late April FNWP will sponsor "*Hydroponics*", a collaboration between NWP and Keney Park which will be a hands-on event of making your own hydroponic planting.



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Annual Pancake Breakfast at Northwest Park March 21st



The Friends of Northwest Park (FNWP) are sponsoring the 39th annual Pancake Breakfast at Northwest Park on March 21st from 8 –11 a.m. in the park’s Warming Shed. The breakfast includes 2 pancakes, 2 sausage links, orange juice and/or coffee. The cost is \$6 for adults; \$4 for children under 12; children 3 and under are free. Breakfast is also free for those

signing up at that day for membership in FNWP. Memberships are: \$25 for single; \$40 for family (free breakfast for a family of up to four); \$100 for Patron membership; and \$500 for Lifetime membership.

Also, visitors to the breakfast will have the opportunity to visit the Sugar House where the park’s own maple syrup is processed from trees tapped throughout the park.

