

A great summer job

n Students create trails, pull Knotweed at Hampton's Ice Pond

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HAMPTON — Students at Seacoast Youth Services in Seabrook were praised last week for their hard work in sprucing up the area around the town-owned Ice Pond off Woodland Road this summer.

The town's Conservation Commission honored the students during a ribbon cutting ceremony Friday, Aug. 7 unveiling the two new handicapped accessible trails they installed at the pond.

"They have just done a remarkable job," said Jay Diener, who noted that in addition to creating the trails, the students also dug up a tremendous amount of Japanese Knotweed, an invasive species, that has infested pond.

"Before they started working here you couldn't even see the pond from the road," Diener said. "It was that high up filled with Japanese Knotweed."

Over 20 students from Seacoast Youth Services have been working at the pond two days a week since the beginning of June.

Michael Murray of Seacoast Youth Services, said the kids had a good time working on the project. The goal of the summer program offered by Seacoast Youth Services is to give students an opportunity to gain job experience.

"It was a fantastic experience for these kids," Murray said. "For kids who really hadn't worked before, they did a tremendous job at working hard.

"It wasn't like working at a grocery store bagging groceries in an air-conditioned environment," Murrey said.

Student Britney Phaneuf said the toughest part of the job was trying to kill the Knotweed at the pond.

"The Knotweed was a pain," said Phaneuf. "We had to rip it out from the bottom so the roots come up. If you don't, it will just grow right back"

"Some of the roots were really big," added student Gina Rosatf. "You have to be a little violent with it."

Diener said the plant has become a huge problem at the pond. It is a narrow form of bamboo that continues to grow vigorously until it reaches up to 10 feet in height.

"It spreads incredibly fast and it will take over everything," Diener said.

Murray said they tried to kill the plants by smothering them with plastic sheeting, hoping that without water or sunlight the plant will just die off.

"Hopefully it will work," Murray said.

The group also installed two new handicapped accessible trails including one that leads right to the pond.

"So now people can come down with their wheelchair, and sit and look at the view," Murrey said.

Diener said the group is very happy about the new trails at the pond.

"We wanted to dress up the area with trails for passive recreation — walking, snowshoeing, biking," said Diener. "It is such a beautiful area, and we want people to enjoy it."

Phaneuf said the group had a good time working at the pond.

"It was hard work, but we made it fun," Phaneuf said. "The thing I'm not going to miss is the poison ivy."

Nathan Page, chairman of the town's Conservation Commission, said the group's work is already paying off.

"People are already starting to spot the pond," Page said. "We had a father and son canoeing last week, and last night someone was kayaking.

"Hopefully more people from the town will start to utilize their property," Page said.

Voters approved purchasing the 12 ½ acres of land off Woodland Road, which included the pond, back in 2005 in order to protect the land and wildlife habitats in the area from further development. The deal between the town and the parcel's owner was finalized in 2007.