



**SOMETHING:** Johnston's own Jean Lynch is presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from Alicia Lehrer, Executive Director of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.

## Lynch honored for dedication to Woonasquatucket River

By TIM FORSBERG

It's been an amazing year for the Woonasquatucket River, which was recently topped when Johnston's own Jean Lynch was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her outstanding dedication to the watershed.

At a year-end celebration held Tuesday evening at the Rising Sun Mills Atrium, volunteers, friends, staff and



**FILL IT UP:** John Hake (left), a fishery biologist and vice president of the board of directors of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, gets a load of mulch to spread at Cricket Field in Johnston.

## ■ Lynch

(Continued from page xx)

Council (WRWC) gathered to review all that's been accomplished in and around the river during the last year. As stewards of the Woonasquatucket, the WRWC is a nonprofit that supports the restoration and preservation of the river as an environmental, recreational and economic asset of the state.

In the last 12 months, 1,052 volunteers donated 4,312 hours of their time at multiple projects along the river, with an estimated value of \$104,091. The WRWC served through their programs more than 1,800 people, along with the thousands of visitors who use the bike and walking trail along with the associated parks.

The WRWC's Clean Days on the Greenway series, which begins in the spring and sees volunteers ban together for clean ups—such as spring weedings, spreading mulch, in-water cleanups, shoreline litter sweeps, painting and graffiti removal, was extremely successful. There were 34 Clean Days held along the river this year, including at Cricket Field and the Johnston Gateway near Hillside Avenue, which, all told, removed thousands of pounds of trash from the seven miles of trails and parks and removed 512 graffiti tags.

The North Providence Kids Klub Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative Program, in conjunction with the WRWC, adopted Cricket Field this summer, cleaned it up, and donated beautifully decorated picnic tables for the public to use.

For the first time in roughly 150 years, herring and other important saltwater fish finally returned to Johnston via the WRWC's \$500,000, S-shaped and easy to use passage for fish that was completed adjacent to the Manton Dam off Goldsmith Street and opened for its first season. This year's fish count on the Woonasquatucket recorded 19,795 herring, making their way upstream through the WRWC's five fish ladders, compared to 8,157 counted during the previous year.

Also celebrated was the WRWC's initiatives for green infrastructure, bike camps and paddle clubs, bird watching walks and fundraising efforts, along with local educa-

tion efforts to protect the Woonasquatucket from future misuse.

The celebration also included a look at the year ahead, during which the WRWC hopes to build outdoor classrooms, restore natural habitats, along with multi-million dollar improvement and path extension projects along with park improvements.

Capping off the celebration was the presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to Jean Lynch. According to WRWC's Executive Director Alicia Lehrer, Lynch has been instrumental in advancing the mission of the organization since its inception.

"Jean told us this year that she couldn't volunteer with us as much as she has been because her knees will not let her do that anymore," said Leher. "Jean joined the board of the watershed council before we were a watershed council. She has been on the board twice, she has been a board secretary, she's helped with so many of our events. She is the chief Woony Ride volunteer feeder, she makes over 200 peanut butter sandwiches for the event every year. Jean is a hard worker bee, and we're so sorry that Jean can't be as hard of a worker bee as she has been, but we have really been privileged to have her be somebody who has donated so much of her time and so much of her love to the Woonasquatucket."

Leher then presented Lynch with a beautiful trophy honoring the occasion. Lynch thanked the council and volunteers for their efforts and explained how she spent her youth in Olneyville to her time as a Johnston resident now and has observed all the beneficial changes that the organization has made to the water quality and environment surrounding the Woonasquatucket.

"This was such a surprise. It's wonderful, I'm just so appreciative of what I've seen happen to this area because of growing up here and the work that they've put in," said Lynch. "I'm lucky I've seen what's happened and I'm looking forward to the future and so much more."

While her knees have presented an issue recently and slowed her down, Lynch said her sandwich knife is still at the ready if it's needed to help benefit the cause.

"There's a lot of things that I can't do that I used to do, but I can still make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches," she said.