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 Rainier Sun Mills Antiques in Johnston, Lynch was presented with the award.

Lynch joined the board of the watershed council before it was even formed. She has been on the board for more than 10 years, serving as both a board member and secretary. Lynch has been working with volunteers and organizations to protect the Woonasquatucket from future misuse.

The celebration also included a look at the future, with Lynch highlighting the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council's efforts to protect the Woonasquatucket from future misuse.

Council (WBWC) gathered to review all that’s been accomplished in and around the river during the last year. As stewards of the Woonasquatucket, the WBWC 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, 1,652 volunteers donated 4,212 hours of their time at multiple projects along the river, with an estimated value of $104,091. The WBWC served through their programs more than 1,900 people, along with the thousands of visitors who use the hike and walking trail along with the associated parks.

The WBWC’s Clean Days on the Greenway series, which begins in the spring and sees volunteers clean up the river as well as some of the parks along the river, has been successful. There were 34 Clean Days held along the river this year, including at Cricket Field and the Johnston Gateway near Hillside Avenue, which is now a public space.

The North Providence Kids Club Haabro Summer Learning Initiative Program, in conjunction with the WBWC, 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 WBWC’s $500,000 project at the town’s derelict mill, opening for its first season. This year’s fish count on the Woonasquatucket recorded 19,795 herring, making their way upstream through the WBWC’s fish ladders, compared to 8,157 counted during the previous year.

Also celebrated was the WBWC’s initiatives for green infrastructure, bike camps and paddle clubs, bird watching walks and fundraising efforts, along with local education efforts to protect the Woonasquatucket from future misuse.

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

Jean Lynch was honored on this year’s annual gala and benefit, which was held Tuesday evening at the Rainier Sun Mills Antiques in Johnston. Lynch has been working with volunteers and organizations to protect the Woonasquatucket from future misuse.

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