

Land trust receives anonymous donation of 11 acres

By Jim Tierney
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VERNON — For Karl Hasel, vice president of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust and member of the town's Open Space Task Force, a recent anonymous donation of 11 acres along Boulder Ridge near Valley Falls served as a great way to begin the new millennium.

Hasel said the property, which abuts a town-owned soccer field at the top of Boulder Crest Lane and the Rails-to-Trails system, would be used to extend existing public hiking trails in the area.

The Northern Connecticut Land Trust is a non-profit organization operating in East Windsor, Ellington, Enfield, Somers, Staf-

ford, and Vernon to protect natural resources and open space. It trust already owns about 20 acres in town, and nearly 200 acres total in north-central Connecticut.

"Obviously we were excited, because that area in general is one we would target to try and expand and add to Valley Falls," Hasel said Friday. "Most of the area would be open to the public for passive recreation."

As to who the anonymous donor might be, Hasel said: "I presume they were local, but that's just a wild guess on our part. It seemed they were familiar with that general area, and wanted to add to it."

"It's nice to publicize that there are different ways of meeting our goal. This one was interesting. We would love to thank them personally. But, through the newspaper

is the best we can do."

Hasel said the donors worked through local lawyer Amy Paterson.

About a year ago, Hasel said, trust members heard there was interest in several different parcels in the Boulder Ridge area.

"The donors arranged the purchase of this property directly with the owners," he said. "They then donated appreciated stock to the non-profit trust to finance the purchase and associated legal fees."

That transaction, he said, was a first for the trust. "It represents a unique approach for individuals to achieve personal financial goals while at the same time contributing to the future of Vernon's open space," he said.

Hasel said the donors put the stock into an account, without trust members being able to

trace the transaction. He said the property cost about \$10,000.

"They did all the legwork," he said of the donors. "We sold the stock and bought the land. The Northern Connecticut Land Trust is listed as the property owner in the land records. They basically worked the whole thing out and handed it to us."

Town Council Republican Brian R. Motola, chairman of the mayoral conservation, flood control, and open space subcommittee, was thrilled by the donation.

"It's a good addition to the open space in that area, which is mainly for passive recreation," he said. "The development of that parcel is problematic anyway because you don't want to develop the ridge line."