

Opening is near for Gewirz Trail on newly conserved land



Members of the Gewirz family, from left, Michael, Rita, Levi, Jonathan, Bernie, Steven, Katrina and Sarah, stand near the entrance of the Gewirz Trail on Friday. [JESSICA POHL PHOTOS]

By Derek Gomes
Staff writer

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Friday morning at the head of the Gewirz Trail on the newly conserved Spruce Acres Farm property.

Many individuals and groups are responsible for raising the money necessary to purchase and preserve the property that otherwise could have been developed into a 20-lot residential subdivision, said Chuck Allott, executive director of the Aquidneck Land

Trust.

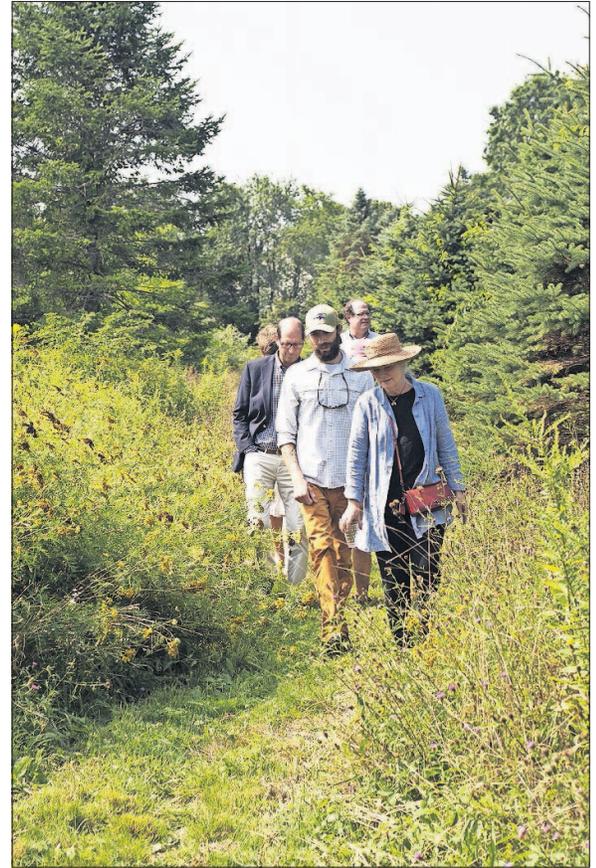
The towns of Middletown and Portsmouth; the Rhode Island Agricultural Lands Preservation Commission; van Beuren Charitable Foundation; and Gewirz family each gave \$300,000 toward the \$2.3 million purchase price.

More than 500 individual donors also supported the fundraising campaign, Allott said at the 23-acre former Christmas tree farm that sits on the Portsmouth-Middletown line.

“Our work to conserve open

space on this island affects every person on it, every day,” he told those gathered for the ceremony, including members of the Gewirz family. “The support all of you give to [the Aquidneck Land Trust] has a lasting impact, and we are all grateful to each of you.”

The trail splinters into loops on both the Portsmouth and Middletown sides of the property, totaling about 1.5 miles in all. It is not open to the public yet as the land trust has plans to add a curb cut for a parking area at the front of the property.



Members of the Gewirz family walk along the Gewirz Trail on Friday. [JESSICA POHL PHOTO]

A single-family home there is currently being rented, with plans that it will one day serve as the land trust’s main offices, with the accessory buildings hosting educational activities.

Preserving the property serves as a barrier to further vehicular congestion and protects the water

supply at nearby Sisson Pond, said Zia Eftekhar, the trust’s board treasurer.

Jonathan Gewirz recognized the Aquidneck Land Trust’s efforts to preserve roughly 2,500 acres on Aquidneck Island, noting that “there’s more to protect.”

dgomes@newportri.com