

## **Trail Easement Granted to the Green Mountain Horse Association**

December 17, 2010: The Green Mountain Horse Association is pleased to announce that we have received a trail easement from landowner Linda Johnson granting the organization use of a trail on her West Windsor property. The easement was signed in the GMHA offices in South Woodstock, VT, on December 15, 2010 by Johnson and GMHA Executive Director, Marty Hunt. Paul Kendall, longtime GMHA supporter and former Board Member, notarized the document, which was recorded in the town office later that day. The event was celebrated with the GMHA Trail Committee and staff, who enthusiastically toasted the acquisition.

Linda Johnson, a supporter of GMHA for many years, was eager to place the easement on her West Windsor, Vermont property in order to keep the trails open to equestrians. Johnson's property, which occupies 26 scenic acres on Banister Road in the heart of horse country, is currently listed for sale. "I'd like to think that the next owner of this property would enjoy horses as much as I do, but you never know," said Johnson. "I hope that other landowners will take this same precaution and consider granting easements, whether to GMHA or other conservation groups." Linda, a longtime GMHA Member, supporter, and equestrian enthusiast, considered GMHA the obvious choice to receive the easement.

The easement's purpose was clearly defined and easily agreed upon by both Linda and GMHA. The goals for creating the easement included several aspects. First, the creation of the easement provides permanent equestrian recreational and transitory use for GMHA's members and event participants, in a scenic and natural environment. As Johnson's largely open property affords spectacular views of Mount Ascutney, the Connecticut River Valley, and beyond, it gives equestrians an ideal place to enjoy all that the rolling Vermont hills have to offer.

Another of Johnson's goals was to promote and celebrate traditional equestrian trail use in the region, which has become a part of the local culture for many residents. Johnson herself moved from Connecticut to Vermont in 2005 to become part of the unique equestrian community. Since then Johnson, a well known hostess, has been known to greet local equestrian friends passing through her trails with a friendly wave, big smile, and refreshments from her porch for both humans and equines. Johnson is planning to stay in the area, but purchase a smaller property when her home sells.

The easement gives GMHA use of a 26' wide corridor which begins on Banister Road and follows Johnson's driveway, then splits off in two directions, ending at the abutting Gaynor and Stone properties. GMHA and Johnson will collaborate on a management plan each year, and will share responsibilities for maintaining the trail. The easement connects Banister Road, a popular area for horseback riding and conditioning, to the trails on the Gaynor and Stone property and beyond. The location of the easement will prove invaluable for both GMHA and local equestrians, easily fulfilling another goal of the easement- to link this trail with others in the vicinity.

When GMHA was founded in 1926, bridle trails stretched from Massachusetts to Vermont. The organization's mission tasked future generations with developing and maintaining bridle trails, which has been an uphill endeavor through the years with many land sales and subdivisions, an increasing population, and other cultural roadblocks. GMHA's Board of Directors recently re-affirmed the organization's commitment to trails and preservation, and decided to dedicate more resources to securing easements.

"The entire organization, including our Board, staff, and members, are truly committed to preserving, protecting, and maintaining the trails network that surrounds GMHA. The trail system, which covers hundreds of miles, and five area towns, is what makes GMHA and Windsor Country truly unique," said Executive Director Marty Hunt. "We are incredibly lucky to have dedicated, generous landowners like Linda who support this effort. They deserve all of our thanks!"

GMHA Trails Coordinator Deborah Donahue, who worked closely with Linda Johnson on her easement, is confident that there are more easements in GMHA's future. "GMHA is currently working with several other landowners in our area who are interested in granting easements, several of which are pending and very near completion. We hope that there are many more announcements like this to come."

"For the last five years, we have been working hard to secure open space and preserve equestrian access to the trails, and now we are seeing those efforts begin to pay off with signed easements. It is a really exciting time for GMHA," said Deborah Donahue. GMHA recorded a trail easement through its own property in February 2009. This trail, which is used by snowmobiles in the winter, runs from Morgan Hill Road through the length of the property and connects with Route 106.

The Green Mountain Horse Association, a 65-acre equestrian facility in South Woodstock, Vermont, is a non-profit 501 (3)(c) organization fully committed to serving our five equine disciplines including: Trail Riding, Hunter/Jumpers, Dressage, Eventing and Driving.

With approximately 1,500 members, GMHA is a vital community of equestrian enthusiasts. In addition to competitions and pleasure rides, GMHA offers many educational activities and is a leader in trail stewardship and land preservation. Member support helps to ensure that GMHA will continue to exist for future generations and preserves its legacy in the equestrian community.