



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 2020

Contact: Laurie Walker

315-317-9481

lwalker@cnylandtrust.org

7 Fennell Street,

Skaneateles, NY 13152

Announcing the Campaign to Save Pleasant Valley

Syracuse, NY – The Central New York Land Trust is launching a \$622,000 campaign to purchase, enhance and endow 203 acres in Pleasant Valley in the Town of Onondaga. The property is the former home of the Cedarvale Maple Syrup Company's maple forest, and features streams, ponds and wetlands that support a diverse bird and wildlife population.

The campaign will conserve the former track of land owned by the Cedarvale Maple Syrup Company, knitting together almost 300 acres of conserved land, and made accessible with parking and trails. "The Pleasant Valley Preserve will be a tremendous community resource for wildlife and recreation. It will protect the valley for future generations," said Albert Joerger, Executive Director of the Central New York Land Trust.

The Central New York Land Trust is a local, not-for-profit land trust based in Skaneateles, NY. The beautiful property is located across from the Cedarvale Maple Syrup Company store, run until recently by Karl and Mary Wiles, on Pleasant Valley Rd. The Wiles' property included more than 200 acres and was managed not only for its maple sugar bush, but also for agricultural crops and Christmas trees. In addition to the streams and ponds, the preserve has extensive open and wooded wetlands, upland forest, and nearly 3 miles of unmarked trails for hiking. The Wiles Family always welcomed their neighbors to walk in their woods or enjoy the wonderful sounds of the spring peepers in the wetlands.

Many people in the Town of Onondaga and neighboring communities are familiar with beautiful Pleasant Valley, which runs from Cedarvale to Marcellus. The Haudenosaunee used its woods and wetlands for hunting and for sources of medicine. In the early 1800s Europeans & New Englanders set up farms and gristmills near the waters of Cedarvale Creek and W. Onondaga Creek. Many of these early settlers are buried in cemeteries along Pleasant Valley Rd., in nearby S. Onondaga or Navarino, or in smaller family plots in the area. In the 1940s people drove cars from Syracuse for an "outing" in Pleasant Valley, just as cyclists enjoy its scenic beauty in regular rides through this valley today.

In early 2018 the Wiles Family decided to retire from farming and sell the property. The idea that such a beautiful section of the valley might face unknown development spurred a group of neighbors to look into ways to save it. They contacted the Central New York Land Trust to advocate for purchase of the property. The Land Trust already had a history in the valley: they owned adjacent, parcels which were previously donated by the Lockwood family for conservation. The new Wiles' parcel could open these

previously landlocked Central New York Land Trust properties. Thus the dream of the Pleasant Valley Preserve was born.

However, time was of the essence. The only option in the short term was for neighbors to be the financial support for the Central New York Land Trust until funds could be raised from the community to complete its purchase. Half the money for the purchase of the land was immediately donated or pledged by the neighbors and other donors (\$150,000 total). At present, a \$150,000 matching gift campaign is underway to complete the purchase of the Pleasant Valley Preserve by early 2022. A Friends of Pleasant Valley Preserve group, led by neighbors Barb Root, Harvey Nusbaum and Diana Green, was created to help with fundraising for the project and to help care for the land. "We encourage interested individuals to help us save this beautiful site," states the group. "Please visit our fundraising site at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-save-pleasant-valley> and make a donation today! Also, we hope you will look for and support future Friends of Pleasant Valley fundraising activities."

"When this project is successful it will close a chapter in a remarkable story of the partnering between people with a shared a passion to conserve our community: the land advocates, the Land Trust, and understanding sellers. This land will become a place where the community can hike, ski, snowshoe, fish and simply enjoy the bounty and beauty of nature. We invite everyone to help this become a reality by supporting this project," said Rick Smardon, Board Chair, Central New York Land Trust.

Central New York Land Trust:

Central New York Land Trust is a 47-year-old non-profit, membership driven land trust with a mission to preserve and protect natural areas in order to provide our communities clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat and a chance to connect with the land. Our programs include land protection, land stewardship, and outreach & education. We currently have 46 preserves and over 3,000 acres of protected land throughout Central New York. For more information visit www.cnylandtrust.org.

Photo #1 – hiking through the valley

Photo #2 – Pond

Photo #3 – entranceway to Pleasant Valley site

###