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THE MINNESETAH CURRENT

Friends of the Outlet Newsletter Featuring the Keuka Outlet Trail



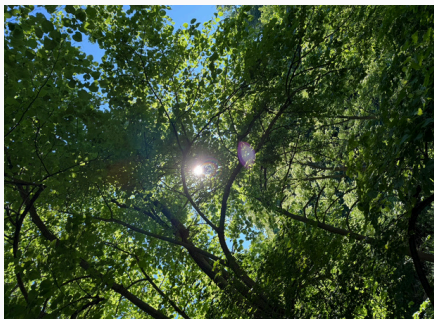
Savor the birdsongs

An early season morning this summer found me starting at the Dresden end of the trail, working my way towards Keuka Lake. Not more than a few steps in, and I was struck by the liveliness around me. In sight, yes, but mainly in sound. By the time I walked past the pond, the sound was so intense I had to stop and take it all in.

Naturally I pulled out my phone and Merlin Bird ID app. I hit record, and the app came alive with twitters, lighting up the screen from one call to another. I was hoping to post a video screen shot of this to share the delight of our avian companions with you, but learned that in recent updates the user must manually save the session.

Do you use the Merlin Bird ID app? We'd be curious to know what birds you've encountered on the trail. Let us know--tag the Keuka Outlet Trail on Instagram and Facebook. We always love to hear about your experiences.

For now, I'll just savor the sounds of that morning. And next time, I'll be sure to hit save.-JW



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Mission

The Friends of the Outlet, Inc. is a non-profit organization working with the community to preserve, protect and develop our properties along Keuka Outlet Creek to provide an area for natural, physical, outdoor and historic-oriented recreation and education, while serving as responsible stewards for the natural resources of our organization.



A message from our President

BY KENNETH WALKER

This is my first newsletter offering as the new board president of the Friends of the Outlet (FOTO). Many thanks to Keith Prather for his steady guidance as our most recent president. His seat on the Board of Directors expired in April, when our bylaws required him to step off for a year. Keith's passion for the Outlet Trail is obvious to anyone who knows or works with him, so you will see him out there!

Members of the FOTO board and select volunteers enjoyed two days under our tent at the Keuka Arts Festival, swapping stories with Trail enthusiasts about the Keuka Outlet. One young student from the Penn Yan Elementary School was studying turtles in class, and she and her family were planning a visit to Turtle Pond--between the Milo Mills access and Seneca Mills Falls. We also heard tales of both geocaching and earth caching on the Trail. Folks from across the country were reconnecting with the Trail that weekend, and some were visiting for the first time.

The annual Keuka Outlet Trail Half-Marathon and 10K races took place on Saturday, July 18. Braving periods of rain, runners experienced the Trail in the height of summer, with its lush green growth and the many species of birds calling out to them. Many thanks to Willow Running for organizing another successful running event in Yates County. We'll see them again at Celebrate Cascade for the Mill-to-Mill 5K and 10K races. Thanks also to our Trail volunteers for helping out at aid stations and crossroads.

Volunteer opportunities abound on the Outlet Trail. If you are interested, please contact FOTO board member Jenn Doan at jdoan@keukaoutlettrail.org. Jenn is already taking names to be on hand for our flagship event Celebrate Cascade on Saturday, September 19. Hope to see you there!



Friends of the Outlet honored with the Norman Snow Award

We have some exciting news to share with our members and volunteers: Friends of the Outlet has been presented with the Norman Snow Award by the Yates County Chamber of Commerce!

The Award recognizes an individual or organization whose service, leadership, and dedication have made a positive impact on the Yates County community. We're grateful to the Chamber for this meaningful recognition and proud that the Keuka Outlet Trail was recognized as a place that enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike.

Although the award was presented to Friends of the Outlet, the recognition belongs to an entire community. Over the years, countless volunteers have donated their time to clean up the trail, improve access, maintain bridges and pathways, organize events, and protect this remarkable natural resource. Our members, supporters, community partners, local businesses, and generous donors have all played an important role in ensuring that the Keuka Outlet Trail remains a welcoming destination for walking, running, biking, fishing, taking photographs, birdwatching, and simply enjoying the beauty of the Finger Lakes.

Most of all, thank you. Every volunteer who has cleared a trail, every member who has renewed their support, every donor, partner, and trail visitor who has cared for this place has contributed to what Friends of the Outlet is able to accomplish. This recognition is a reflection of that shared commitment.

The Keuka Outlet Trail is one of our community's greatest treasures, and we're grateful to everyone who helps protect, improve, and enjoy it. Thank you for being part of what makes the trail such a special place.



The Norman Snow Award recognizes individuals and organizations whose leadership, service, and dedication have made a lasting, positive impact on the Yates County community.



Judy Erwin (left) from Friends of the Outlet was on hand to receive the Norman Snow Award from Jessica Bacher from the Yates County Chamber of Commerce (right).



At the Keuka Arts Festival, we were able to reach new members and show off the trail with maps and past and present photos.

**“It’s under our feet
when we need it”**



Sarah Hestley, with Judy Erwin, along with other volunteers stepped up to help staff the booth. Many thanks!

Fun at the Keuka Arts Festival

BY JUDY ERWIN

I spent several hours at the Friends of the Outlet booth during the Keuka Arts Festival on June 12 & 13th. During that time, I met so many interesting people...locals and visitors to our area. For those who were familiar with the Outlet Trail, the common thread was their love for this pathway running from Keuka to Seneca. One young woman from the Buffalo area told me of her 5 AM walk along the trail that morning at sunrise...taking in the serenity of the trees, birds, and flowing stream. It was a joy to see a young person so excited about being out in nature. And then a young Boy Scout dropped by to tell us he had just helped with a project along the trail. He added a comment about their troop camping experience at our campground near the Dresden end of the trail. Others recounted bike rides to the falls, leisurely strolls with their dogs and winter walks on a snowy day.

One guest stopped by to renew her membership and point out that her daughter was in one of our photographs on display. Those photos were very popular. Many did not know of the history of the mills along the path. An exception to that was a girl who was excited to point out an old mill photo and say that her grandfather used to work there! The newly minted stickers were a big hit and drew people over to the table so that we could show them a map of the trail and encourage them to become a Friend of the Outlet. We gained several new members over the weekend. The water bowl for dogs was also a big draw to our furry friends.

An especially enjoyable conversation began when we asked a young man about his hat: Finger Lakes Effect. He publishes a newsletter about things to see and do in the Finger Lakes. We were delighted to talk to him about the Outlet Trail. Networking helps us all. He gave us some ideas and we shared our passion for our trail. During the weekend, we observed festival goers soaking up the scenery along this section of the Outlet flowing into the village from the lake.

The iconic Fruit House, an old stop along the steamboat route, was a subject of countless cell phone photos. A father and son fished from an old dock across from the weathered old building. We were thankful for several volunteers who worked the booth with us. Thanks, Sarah, Rachel and Craig! All in all...it was a great weekend promoting our trail! A quote from our Board president: “It’s under our feet when we need it.”



Eagle Scout Projects...and more

This year two Eagle Scout projects were completed on the Keuka Outlet Trail. A first aid box kit was installed in various locations along the trail as a part of Bryanna Crane's project, while Nathan Mineses installed blue safety signs.

Eagle Scout Project #1: Emergency Locator Sign Installation

BY NATHAN MINESES

My family moved to Penn Yan in August of 2016. We love to explore nature and we found the Keuka Outlet Trail. We hike, bike and do some fishing here. In summer of 2023 my aunt and my grandmother visited from the Philippines. They love to enjoy nature too, so we brought them to Watkins Glen State Park, and hiked the gorge. As we hiked the gorge there were signs in the trail that caught my attention. These are Emergency locator signs. I said to myself, "maybe I can do this on the Keuka Outlet Trail too." This came to fruition for my Eagle Scout rank requirement to do an Eagle Scout Project.

Why This Project? (The Purpose)

- **Safety in Remote Areas:** The trail runs through a scenic remote area where cell service can be spotty. If an injury occurs, pinpointing the location between Penn Yan and Dresden is difficult.
- **Rapid Emergency Response:** Markers allow hikers to identify their exact location, enabling emergency services to find them faster than using descriptions like "near the old mill".
- **Supporting the Community:** As a well-loved local resource, enhancing the trail ensures it remains a safe place for families and outdoor enthusiasts.

How the Project Was Executed

- **Planning and Mapping:** Working with trail organizers to identify high-risk or difficult-to-access areas where markers were most necessary.
- **Installation:** Physical installation of durable, clearly marked posts at specific location
- **Coordination:** Ensuring local emergency responders (police and fire departments) have the map of these markers.

Eagle Scouts Making a Difference



Nathan Mineses leading the installation of rapid emergency response markers along the trail.



Nathan leading volunteers in the emergency response marker installation



Markers allow hikers to identify their exact location, enabling emergency services to find them



Nathan Mineses pictured next to one of the Emergency Locator signs installed along the trail.

Eagle Scout Projects and more, cntd.

- Volunteerism: We had to send communication to various stake holders and to different organizations in the community about the project and we needed volunteers to make this project happen. We had an overwhelming response from the Keuka Outlet Trail maintenance volunteer team, the Penn Yan and Dresden Fire Departments, and Pack 44, Troop 44, Troop 444 Scouts and families.

This project transforms the trail from just a scenic route into a managed, safe recreational area for everyone.

I am so grateful for this opportunity to do something special for this community. Special thanks to all the people and organizations that helped this project, either directly or indirectly: The Friends of the Outlet Board and the maintenance volunteers, the Yates County Sheriff Department, Yates County Emergency Management, Penn Yan Fire Department, Dresden Fire Department, Penn Yan Police Department, Penn Yan Village Board, Dresden Village Board, CCMI, Pack 44, Troop 44, Troop 444, my friends, my teachers and especially my family.

Nathan Mineses
Boy Scout Troop 44 -Penn Yan.



The team that helped Nathan's Emergency Sign Locator Eagle Scout Project come to fruition.



Eagle Scouts and more, cntd.

Eagle Scout Project #2: First Aid Boxes Installed along the Trail

BY BRYANNAH CRANE

Bryannah Crane, a member of Scouts BSA Troop 725, recently completed her Eagle Scout service project by installing outdoor first aid boxes along the Keuka Outlet Trail between Penn Yan and Dresden. The project was created to improve safety and provide emergency first aid supplies to hikers, bikers, and visitors using the popular trail throughout the year.

The first aid boxes were officially installed on May 16 at three locations along the trail: Seneca Mill Falls, Cascade Mill, and Hopeton. Each box was carefully designed and built to withstand outdoor weather conditions while giving trail users access to basic medical supplies in the event of minor injuries or emergencies.

Funding for the first aid supplies was raised through donation jars that were placed at local businesses throughout the Penn Yan and Dundee communities. The project received tremendous support from local residents and businesses who generously contributed to help make the idea a reality. Bryannah said the success of the project would not have been possible without the kindness and support shown by the community. The wood and building materials for the project were donated by AC+P and Knapp and Schlappi Lumber Company. Their contributions helped provide the materials needed to construct the boxes and complete the installations along the trail.

The boxes were built with the help of volunteers as well as members of Scouts BSA Troop 725 and Scouts BSA Troop 25. Volunteers worked together throughout the project to help cut materials, assemble the boxes, organize supplies, and prepare the sites for installation. The teamwork and community involvement played a major role in bringing the project to completion. *(cntd. on next page)*

These First Aid Boxes
are stationed
throughout the trail,
thanks to Bryannah



Each box includes a 350-piece first aid kit



Penn Yan's Scout Troop 444 initiated the camping season at Hopeton Campground the first weekend of May 2026



Memories formed camping are unlike none other!

Eagle Scouts and more, cntd.

As part of earning the rank of Eagle Scout, Bryannah was responsible for planning, organizing, fundraising, coordinating volunteers, and leading the project from start to finish. The project reflects her dedication to community service and her commitment to creating something that will benefit both local residents and visitors for years to come.

Bryannah would like to thank everyone who donated, volunteered, and supported the project, including the local businesses that hosted donation jars and the companies that supplied materials. The first aid boxes stand as a reminder of what can be accomplished when a community comes together to support a meaningful cause.

Scout Troop 444 Camp at Hopeton

BY JUDSON REID

Penn Yan's Scout Troop 444 initiated the camping season at Hopeton Campground the first weekend of May 2026. The all-girl scout troop spent the weekend volunteering and then camped at Hopeton. Scouts earned their Fire'em Chit, which is a recognition of the achievement of safe fire making skills, worked on knots and camp cooking. The older members of the troop hiked four miles on the trail.

Camping, cooking, hiking and fire making skills are all essential steps for the scouts to advance rank and achieve merit badges. Troop 444 has a special history with the Outlet Trail and Hopeton Campground, being the first group to camp there in 2024 and having camped there each season since. The Troop has also regularly used the trail to get their hiking miles in as well as clean-up days removing trash and debris. The Hopeton Campground is the site of Scout Nina Garcès Reid (PYA '27) Eagle Scout project, a native plant garden to enhance bird and wildlife habitat.

There are many ways to help keep the Keuka Outlet Trail beautiful! To volunteer, please reach out to us.



More Volunteerism this spring

We're grateful for all the volunteers that came out this spring, including Keuka College students, who cleaned up the Hopeton Campground for Celebrate Service, Celebrate Yates, and St. Michael's students, who collected trash to celebrate Earth Day!



Help us steward the Outlet Trail



Become a member and donate at keukaoutlettrail.org.

You can also send a check to:

Friends of the Outlet
PO Box 125
Penn Yan, NY 14527

We appreciate your support!

Become a member



Donate





The Fruit House



*An old historic photo.
Is it the same as the location below?*



The iconic and oft-photographed "fruit house"



This young man and man fished near the "fruit house" during the Keuka Arts Festival

Then & Now: The Fruit House

At first glance, these two photographs could almost be different worlds—or could they? The historic image, likely taken between 1900 and 1915, shows Penn Yan's bustling lakefront during the height of the steamboat era. Warehouses lined the shore as steamers carried passengers, grapes, produce, and other goods up and down Keuka Lake. The large Fruit House was one of the busiest stops along the waterfront, receiving grapes from the surrounding vineyards before they continued by rail to markets across New York and beyond. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Penn Yan's waterfront was a hub of commerce, where agriculture, transportation, and industry came together.

The modern photograph was taken across the Keuka Outlet near the public boat launch, looking toward one of the remaining waterfront buildings behind Carey's Lumber. While it is likely not the same structure as the Fruit House, it serves as a reminder that the Outlet itself was once lined with mills, warehouses, and manufacturing businesses. From the mid-1800s through the early 1900s, the steady flow of water powered grist mills, sawmills, and other industries, while the Outlet also provided an important transportation corridor linking the lake to Penn Yan's growing commercial district. As railroads expanded in the late 1800s and trucks became the primary means of moving goods by the 1920s and 1930s, the need for industrial waterfront buildings gradually declined. Many disappeared over the decades, leaving only a few weathered reminders of Penn Yan's working waterfront.

Today, kayakers paddle the Outlet, anglers cast a line from the dock, and walkers and runners enjoy the peaceful scenery along the Outlet Trail. Nature has reclaimed much of a place that once echoed with steam whistles, wagons, and the sounds of busy industry. These aging buildings quietly remind us of the generations who worked along these waters and helped shape Penn Yan's history. Could these photographs have been taken from nearly the same stretch of shoreline, separated by more than a century? We invite you to compare them, imagine the sights and sounds that once filled this waterfront, and decide for yourself.



Reflections from a hike on the Trail

BY NANCY PEEK

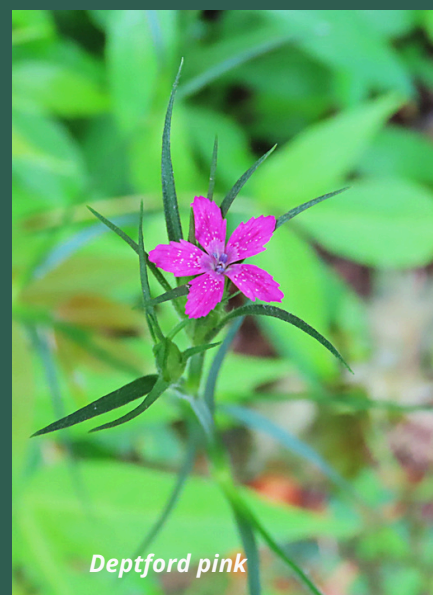
There are many diverse trails in the Finger Lakes region to explore. And over the last two decades more and more abandoned railroad beds have been reclaimed as rail-trails. Penn Yan is most fortunate to have one of these trails which is approximately 7 miles long between the Penn Yan Sports Complex on 54A to the active rail tracks in Dresden.

Our group enjoys walking different sections of this rail-trail to soak in the history of mills, the settlements, the falls, the wildlife and the plethora of trees, plants, weeds, wildflowers and insects. At this point in our group's long history, we accept that we are taking nature walks instead of hikes. Most typically, we walk between 2-3 miles and take in whatever meets our fancy.

Some of the group have apps on their phones that use them to identify bird's songs, wildflowers, plants, trees or insects. While others share personal knowledge of the different things we come across. And, since there is always something different along the trail during the different seasons, we don't tire of doing the different sections more than once during the year.

In the winter, and with fresh snow, the trail looks pristine. And since there are no leaves on most of the trees and bushes, we see things that we've missed during the other three seasons. Spring brings fresh leaves on the plants and their colors are somewhat like fall leaves except they are small and new. Spring also brings a host of early flowers, bloodroot, trout lily, colt's foot, trillium, early meadow rue, to name a few. By summer they have gone to seed. Summer brings its own bouquet of different wildflowers, many different insects hiding from the birds, frogs, and snakes and of course the turtles. Fall colors along the trail shouldn't be missed.

As John Muir said: "When we try to pick out anything by itself we find that it is bound fast by a thousand invisible cords that cannot be broken, to everything in the universe." This rings true on the Outlet Trail.



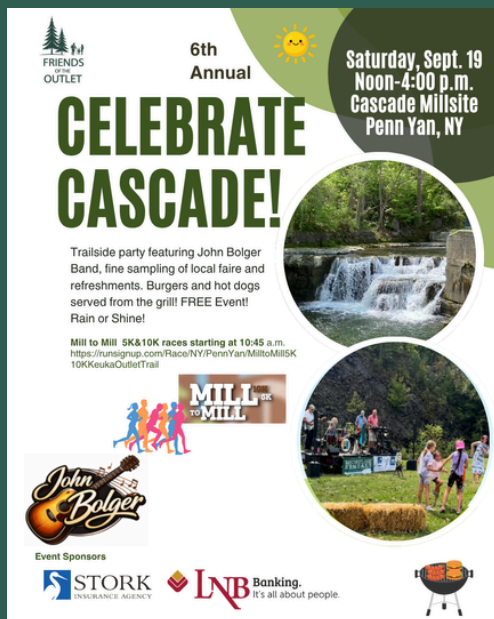
Deptford pink



Upcoming Events

September 19 - Celebrate Cascade & Mill to Mill 5K/10K

October 2 - Spaghetti Dinner at Seneca Lake Duck Hunters Club



6th Annual
CELEBRATE CASCADE!

Trailside party featuring John Bolger Band, fine sampling of local faire and refreshments. Burgers and hot dogs served from the grill! FREE Event! Rain or Shine!

Mill to Mill 5K&10K races starting at 10:45 a.m.
<https://runsignup.com/Race/NY/PennYan/MilltoMill5K>
10KKeukaOutletTrail

MILL to MILL

John Bolger

Event Sponsors

STORK Insurance Agency LNB Banking. It's all about people.

For more news & updates, follow us on Facebook & Instagram

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