Belmont teen earns Eagle Scout for rebuilding trails at Jeff Marden Forest

By GAIL OBER, LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — Parts of the Jeff Marden Forest off Wildlife Boulevard have a new and fresher look, thanks to Eagle Scout Thomas Hayes of the Passaconaway Lodge 220 of the Daniel Webster Council.

For his Eagle Scout project, Hayes coordinated and gathered his fellow scouts and widened and laid gravel on 2,500 linear feet of the 3,000-foot trail that leads from one entrance on Wildlife Boulevard to a pond and then exits further down the road.

He also built a kiosk modeled after the one built by a different Eagle Scout project and placed at the parking lot entrance to the forest nearest the pond.

Hayes was inspired to widen and somewhat smooth the trail with gravel because of his late grandfather, who needed a wheelchair and who he used to take fishing by pushing him to the pond on the eastern side of the trail.

"I wanted to do that for other people who are in wheelchairs," Hayes said.

One of the unique features about the Jeff Marden Forest, which is managed by the Belmont Conservation Committee, is its dedication to handicapped access. Marden, who was an active member of the Planning Board, also used a wheelchair and advocated for environmentally sound stewardship of the 65-acre forest that was named for him following his death at 41 in 2007.

There is also a scholarship in Marden's name for students who want to study environmental science, which is the field Hayes has chosen following his graduation from Belmont High School this spring.

Hayes, who is a member of the National Honor Society at Belmont High School, was also inducted into the Order of the Arrow, which is the National Honor Society of Scouting and required a vote of the members of his troop for induction.

For his project, Hayes did fundraisers for the materials and worked with local contractors like Nutter Enterprises, which gave him a 20 percent discount on the gravel, and the town of Belmont, which trucked the materials for him. Mark Padua Excavating delivered a compacting roller.

Hayes said he and his father, Tim, helped with the original trail project, so he was familiar with how to use the roller and put down the gravel.

The scouts also widened an area near the pond into a clearing and in which they discovered an old stone wall that had partially crumbled. One of their neighbors who used to be a stonemason helped them rebuild the wall.

While Hayes hasn't chosen a college yet, as he is still in the process of applying, he said along with environmental science, he plans on pursuing French language. A member of the French Club, he will be going with his club to France for one of his spring vacations.

Hayes will be officially named an Eagle Scout in a ceremony this spring.
Thomas Hayes stands at the start of the trail where he widened and added gravel as part of his Eagle Scout project in the Jeff Marden Forest in Belmont. (Karen Bobotas/for the Laconia Daily Sun)
Thomas Hayes stands at the trail kiosk he built as part of his Eagle Scout project at the Jeff Marden Forest in Belmont. (Karen Bobotas/for the Laconia Daily Sun)

Thomas Hayes shows the area of the trail where he widened and added gravel as part of his Eagle Scout project in the Jeff Marden Forest in Belmont. (Karen Bobotas/for the Laconia Daily Sun)
Thomas Hayes stands at an area of the trail where he cleaned out the brush surrounding the stone walls and added gravel for his Eagle Scout project at Jeff Marden Forest in Belmont. (Karen Bobotas/for the Laconia Daily Sun)
Thomas Hayes stands at an area of the trail where he cleaned out the brush surrounding the stone walls and added gravel for his Eagle Scout project at Jeff Marden Forest in Belmont. (Karen Bobotas/for the Laconia Daily Sun)