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ON THE TRAIL: County Executive Marc Molinaro, with Winnakee President Sally Mazzarella (r.) and Hyde Park Supervisor Aileen Rohr (l.) is surrounded by local officials and residents at the opening of the Educational Arboretum at Winnakee's Nature Preserve on Van Dam Road. Sarah Imboden / The Observer

New arboretum opens in Hyde Park with a hail of speeches

by Sarah Imboden • May 25, 2014

County and town officials gathered in Hyde Park on a damp May 9 to dedicate the new educational arboretum created by Winnakee Land Trust.

After a short walk into the preserve, County Executive Marc Molinaro cut the ribbon at the trail head and was joined by Town Supervisor Aileen Rohr, county legislature chair Rob Rolison and many other local officials in welcoming the public to this new resource.

"Winnakee has been absolutely instrumental not only in preserving open space and valuable farmland and other natural assets but has also been very keen on educating about and promoting those assets," Molinaro told the group of about 35 attendees.

The arboretum, part of the 150-acre Winnakee Nature Preserve located off Route 9 on Van Dam Road, features a 1.1-mile tour highlighting more than 30 tree and shrub species. Those include, according to a Winnakee news release, "historic trees, invasives, exotics, and species of local importance, whether as habitat or for use as lumber."

In the 20th century, the land was owned by Colonel Archibald Rogers, who mentored young Franklin Delano Roosevelt in forestry practices, the news release said, leading to FDR's lifelong

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interest in stewardship of the nation’s forests.

Winnakee, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, will be working with the four science teachers from the Hyde Park School District who were named Master Teachers this year in order to develop a curriculum and to bring school groups to the arboretum. The work is made possible by a grant from the Open Space Institute.

Molinaro praised the educational component while noting that science had not been his best subject.

“It’s a way of making education uncommon because no two children are alike. Being able to bring students here, being able to connect them with what they learn in the classroom here on the ground ...will take a child who would have fallen behind in the classroom and help that individual excel,” he said.

The Open Space Institute also funded work by Marist College intern Erin Hoagland to identify the tree species and secure signs for the arboretum. An interactive PDF “app” version of the arboretum guide is available at www.winnakeeland.org so that visitors can access the guide by scanning the QR code with a smartphone when visiting the park. The preserve is free and has no set hours of admission.



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