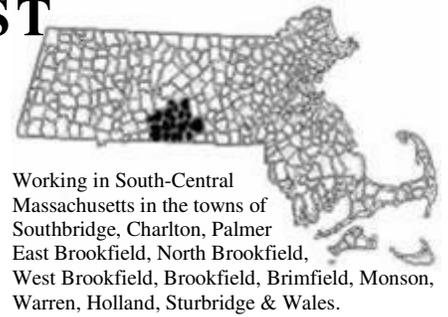




OPACUM LAND TRUST

PO Box 233
Sturbridge, Mass. 01566
Phone/Fax (508)347-9144
www.opacumlt.org



Working in South-Central Massachusetts in the towns of Southbridge, Charlton, Palmer East Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, Brookfield, Brimfield, Monson, Warren, Holland, Sturbridge & Wales.

Winter - Spring 2008

Annual Meeting of the Opacum Land Trust



March 27, 2008
7:00 - 9:00pm

Special Guest Speaker:
Opacum's own
Alan F. Smith
Archaeologist & Geologist
presenting a slide show on

Mysterious Stone Heads

*To be held in the
Upper Auditorium at the*

Hitchcock Academy
*Route 20
Brimfield, Mass*

Please RSVP via e-mail:
info@opacumlt.org
or by phone: (508) 347-9144

Refreshments provided By
TipTop Country Store
8 Central St. Brookfield
www.tiptoponline.us

Raffle Prizes donated By
Wild Bird Crossing
4 Cedar St. Sturbridge
www.wildbirdxing.com

Mysterious Stone Heads

We hope you will be able to attend **Opacum Land Trust's 2008 Annual Meeting**. The featured speaker will be Opacum's very own Alan Smith, who will be presenting a slide show on these curious stone carvings that have turned up in Sturbridge, Southbridge and Brimfield. Alan is an archaeologist and a geologist, as well as a long-time board member of Opacum Land Trust. The stone heads weigh from two to 65 pounds, and appear to have an Iroquois influence. The Iroquois, a powerful and influential native people, were known to travel and trade in this area. Are these stone heads ceremonial artifacts?

On the agenda for the 2008 annual meeting is the unveiling of Opacum's first strategic plan. We are excited to share this new, focused direction that Opacum is embarking upon. The board has been working on developing this plan for over a year, and we are ready to put it into action. Opacum will be announcing, among other things, a new slate of officers, new opportunities for our dedicated volunteers, and the addition of our first paid position.

Recently, the founding president of Opacum Land Trust, Carol Childress, stepped down. After further thought and reflection, Carol decided to relinquish her seat on the board of directors as well, and step away fully. Carol has provided a solid foundation for Opacum and she is stepping back to refocus her efforts in other areas. We are very grateful to Carol for all of the energy and enthusiasm she put into Opacum Land Trust. Thank you, Carol, for eight years of unwavering commitment to open space and conservation within our region.

Opacum's Board of Directors recently elected a new slate of officers. Taking the reins as President is Jennifer Ohop. Jennifer has been involved with Opacum for some time, serving as Vice President since the trust

was founded in 2000. She is the person who compiles and edits this newsletter, and maintains the Opacum Land Trust website. Ohop's main goal as president is to grow the board and involve the membership, which will give Opacum the capacity it needs. It has often been said that "many hands make light work" and with over 600 acres of land currently protected by Opacum, there is a pressing need for volunteers at all levels.

The new Vice President, Gidge Miller, has been working with Opacum since 2002. He is actively involved with open space and planning issues in East Brookfield and is the founder and chair of the East Brookfield Master Plan Committee. Gidge led the effort that resulted in a Strategic Plan for Opacum, and he will be presenting this proactive plan for moving ahead at the Annual Meeting.

Jennifer Morrison will continue in her role as Treasurer of Opacum Land Trust, a position that she has held since 2005. Jennifer's sterling record keeping and knowledge of finance and accounting is a great asset to the Trust.

Ohop, Miller and Morrison share their roles directing the trust with Leslie Duthie and Alan Smith. Leslie is a botanist, and is actively in-



Annual Meeting continued on page 3...

Change is Afoot

A parting message from Opacum's founding president, Carol Childress

Dear Members, Friends and Colleagues:

At this writing it's early February. At the turn of every year, I make a habit of looking at the prior year, and consider all that has happened. I consider whether Opacum has made a positive difference in its communities, and what to do next.

In 2007, with new and renewed memberships, restricted and unrestricted donations from all of you, Opacum preserved the Broz/Simon Farm in Brookfield. The 105-acre Conservation Restriction preserves open pasture, which is hayed; the remaining land is forested and has vernal pools. Thanks to Tim Simon & Gwen Broz's generous donation, the farm is now permanently preserved for future generations. The farms southeast side abuts Dept of Fish & Game (DFG) land known as "Hamilton Woods"; it's land that was given to DFG years ago by the Hamilton Rod & Gun Club. To the farm's northwest is DFG's Wolf Swamp Wildlife Management Area. The farm has always been an integral part of a greenway corridor, but now it is permanently preserved. Three old growth trees on the property are included in the Conservation Restriction – they can never be cut down. As part of Opacum's stewardship commitment to keeping those trees in the landscape, one of them has been cabled – a healthy, mighty oak that is almost 200 years old – and all three trees have been pruned to keep them healthy.

The ripple effect of this project shows its rings spreading outward, as Tim Simon was recently appointed to the Brookfield Conservation Commission, and Gwen Broz was recently appointed to the Brookfield Master Plan Committee. The community is pulling together to plan its growth - its vision for its future - and that farm project seems to have been a catalyst for positive change. Isn't that part of why Opacum is?



Jennifer Ohop & Carol Childress at the Eiffel Tower in Paris. They went to France after Ohop nominated Childress for the Yves Rocher Foundation's Woman of the Earth Award in 2006.

For at least the last couple years, our members, friends and colleagues who have read this newsletter are aware that Opacum is conducting a strategic planning process. The board is now nearing the end of that process. As a result, I am stepping aside as President of Opacum Land Trust. After eight years and eight successful projects, the deck of officers is being shuffled. A new President will be announced at Opacum's annual meeting, and part-time staff is being sought to do those duties that I have been committed to for so long.

I looked around my house the other day and saw a lot that needed doing. My yard has been neglected for eight long years, and my family as well. An amazing, familiar feeling of domesticity has come over me – *dusting* sounds like *fun*. At the same time, as a resident of Sturbridge I realized recently that Opacum needs a non Sturbridge-resident voice. There is political unrest in Sturbridge and before Opacum is affected, it's best that I step away.

I look forward to a well-deserved respite. It has been a complete pleasure doing this work for the last eight years. I highly recommend it as a worthwhile passion. I've had the pleasure of working with board members who are very committed to conservation and I expect great things to happen. Over eight years, I've met and come to know some fantastic people. As Opacum heads into its 9th year of growth and success, please keep

providing your support in all ways possible so that it can continue to make a positive difference in beautiful south-central Massachusetts.

Bon voyage friends!

Carol Childress

18th Annual Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference

A great opportunity to meet people from all over the Commonwealth who support and drive land protection efforts. The conference will be on Saturday, March 29, 2008 from 8:00am - 4:00pm at the Worcester Technical High School. Learn the nuts and bolts of what it takes to conserve land for everyone, forever. Join novice and long-time conservationists for a wide array of workshops on the legal, financial, political and social realities of land conservation. This event sold out last year, so register early. Cost is \$38 before March 13 and \$58 thereafter. For more information or for a registration brochure, visit www.massland.org or call Angel Vega at 978-840-4446 X 405

Sponsored by Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition & The Trustees of Reservations Putnam Conservation Institute

...From page 1... **Opacum's Annual Meeting**

involved with conservation in the town of Monson, chairing the Conservation Commission and serving on the Community Preservation Committee. Alan Smith, who will be presenting *Mysterious Stone Heads* at the annual meeting, hails from Worcester. He has volunteered countless hours over the past 30 years for numerous environmental causes.

Together, we make up the board of Opacum Land Trust.

We realize that Opacum's reorganization may be unsettling to some. While change is scary, change is also inevitable. In the natural world change begets adaptation, evolution, and growth. Without change, we would not exist. Opacum is inspired by the very landscape that it seeks to protect.

Opacum Land Trust is still the same Opacum, with the same mission to preserve land and the same goals of protecting open space. There are some new faces in new places, but Opacum Land Trust remains your local land trust.

We are hopeful that those of you interested in becoming more proactive about conservation within Opacum's thirteen town region will attend the annual meeting. We are looking to increase town representation on the board, as expanding the board will increase our capacity, diversity and our collective perspective.

There are new opportunities for everyone as this land trust grows. More details are included on the insert of this newsletter. If something there piques your interest, and you would be willing to share your time and talent with this organization, please drop us a line by e-mailing info@opacumlt.org or call 508-347-9144.

Mysterious Stone Heads will be an intriguing presentation, and we look forward to seeing you at the 2008 annual meeting.

Please RSVP by calling 508-347-9144 or via e-mail to info@opacumlt.org

Wholesome and delicious refreshments will be provided by the TipTop Country Store, thanks to Rudy and Sarah Heller. TipTop is located at 8 Central Street in Brookfield, and sells a variety of organic and natural items. They have fair-trade coffee and hot soup, as well as over 6,000 items to browse! You can reach them by phone at 508-867-0460 or online at www.tiptoponline.us

Raffle prizes have been donated by Wild Bird Crossing of Sturbridge. Bill & Nancy Cormier, own and operate "The Bird Store" and are providing some fabulous items for our raffle. Included are a brand new pair of binoculars, just in time for spring bird watching, as well as a Bird Song Identiflyer, seed, and gift certificates to Wild Bird Crossing. Stop by the store at 4 Cedar Street in Sturbridge, or call them at 508-347-BIRD. You can also check out their store and scheduled bird walks at www.wildbirdxing.com

See you at the annual meeting! Remember, you can always keep up to date with Opacum by visiting our website: www.opacumlt.org

Opacum Receives Grant for Stewardship at Opacum Woods

In January, Opacum Land Trust and The New England Wildflower Society received a grant for over \$8,600 to improve stewardship and management at Opacum Woods and the adjacent Gaumond Memorial Sanctuary in Sturbridge. This opportunity was available through the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (www.massland.org), in coordination with Franklin Land Trust and Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

The money will fund a botanical inventory and invasive plant study conducted by the New England Wildflower Society, providing the following benefits to Opacum Land Trust:

- A running plant inventory list throughout the survey.
- Documentation of invasive species populations, mapped with GPS.
- Volunteers will be trained in invasive species identification and botanical survey techniques.
- A complete botanical survey of Opacum Woods and the Gaumond property, including comprehensive floristic list and natural community classification for properties (will be included in Stewardship Plan).
- Management workday with NEWFS staff and volunteers, to serve as a prototype for future management actions.
- Preparation of Stewardship Plan, with short and long-term management strategies for preservation of the properties' native biodiversity.

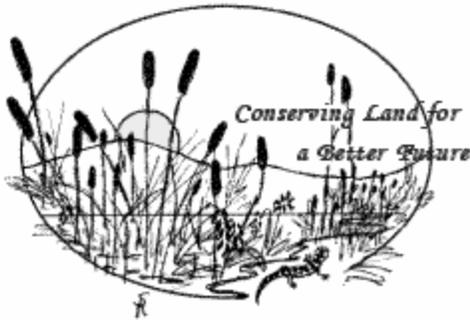
The project will kick off in May, when Opacum's Directors meet with New England Wildflower staff. The first field day for inventory will be Saturday, June 14. Additional field days are scheduled for Tuesday, July 15 and Tuesday, July 22. An invasive species work day will be held on Monday, September 22. In October, staff of the New England Wildflower Society will do a presentation on the results of this effort and provide Opacum with a stewardship plan for these properties

Those of you who are interested in learning more about botanical survey goals and techniques, as well as invasive species identification, are invited to join Opacum and New England Wildflower during one or all of the field days.

It is a privilege to not only receive this grant, but also to be working with a noteworthy organization such as The New England Wildflower Society.



Anyone who is interested in participating with this project, whether you are a current property volunteer or just looking to learn more about our local flora, should contact Leslie Duthie at leslie@opacumlt.org to learn more about the project and this opportunity.



Opacum Land Trust
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**Thank You for Keeping Your
Membership Up to Date!**

Opacum Land Trust is a non-profit conservation organization. Founded in 2000, our mission is to conserve, protect and preserve, in their natural condition, the lands and waters of South Central Massachusetts for the benefit of present and future generations. All donations are fully tax deductible, annual memberships start at \$25.

For more information, please visit our website: www.opacumlt.org

Mark your calendar!

May 18th, 2008

Opacum Land Trust's Eighth Perennial

Plant Sale

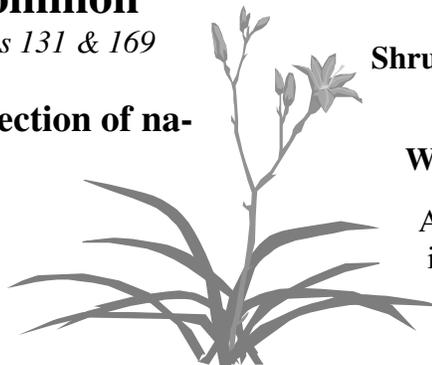
8:00 a.m. - Noon

Southbridge Town Common

At the rotary intersection of Routes 131 & 169

Arrive early for the best selection of native perennial wildflowers, shrubs & trees!

For more information, contact Leslie Duthie by e-mail: leslie@opacumlt.org or call 508-347-9144.



What can you expect this year?

Flowering Crabapples: Need we say more?

Downy Serviceberry: White spring flowers become a prized food for wildlife; a large shrub or small tree with beautiful fall color.

Butterfly Bush: Available in several colors!

Beauty Bush: A stunning fountain shaped shrub covered with pink flowers in June.

Purple Leaf Sand Cherry: Foliage reddish-purple all summer. Fragrant pinkish flowers bloom in spring after leaves appear.

Shrubby Cinquefoil: Yellow flowers, streaked with orange

Winterberry Holly: A must have for robins.

A wide variety of perennial material including a variety of **columbine, beebalms, day lilies, wild bleeding heart, hellebore, hosta, and wild onions** for the garden.