

Three Haverhill Groups Among Those Receiving Essex Heritage Grants

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Haverhill's Whittier Birthplace will reconstruct the "Whittier Trail" throughout Haverhill and provide guide books. Appearing for the ceremony at Methuen Memorial Music Hall are Essex Heritage Chief Operating Officer William Steelman, Whittier Trustees Arthur H. Veasey and Jay Cleary and Essex Heritage CEO Annie Harris. (Courtesy photograph.)

A number of area nonprofit organizations were honored with grants Thursday morning from the Essex National Heritage Commission during a meeting in Methuen.

Creative Haverhill, Whittier Birthplace and Rocks Village Memorial Association, all of Haverhill, were among those receiving 2017 Essex Heritage Partnership Grants during the commission's spring meeting. Amesbury's Whittier Home Association, Andover's Junior Ranger Program and the Methuen-based Clean River Project also received money for projects.

"We recognize the importance of supporting local organizations and we are

proud that we are able to award 20 partnership grants again this year,” said Annie Harris, Essex Heritage CEO. “Over the 19-year life of the program we have provided grants to every community in Essex County – and we know that this seed money greatly impacts the region by leveraging more investments in the Essex National Heritage Area,” she added.

Creative Haverhill will use its grant to coordinate the design and installation of two free-standing interpretative panels on the newest section of the city’s riverfront boardwalk. One panel celebrates Haverhill’s manufacturing history with a focus on shoe-making. The other profiles the Great Fire of 1882 which destroyed 300 downtown businesses.

The history of Rocks Village’s Toll House will be told in a special project. Located next to a bridge crossing the Merrimack River, the 10-by-12-foot Toll House was originally built in 1828 to shelter toll keepers, shoe makers and drawbridge operators before Henry Ford purchased it for his Dearborn, Mich., museum. In 2013, students from Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School built a reproduction at the site.

In 1965, a system of 15 signs about Haverhill native and abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier were erected at historically significant sites throughout Haverhill. Over the years, the signs disappeared and the “Whittier Trail” was largely forgotten. Whittier Trustee Jay Cleary is spearheading a project to create new replacement signs to be installed throughout the city and republish a guide book.

Amesbury’s Whittier Home Association, which operates the home where Whittier moved in 1836, will use its Essex Heritage grant to insulate the home’s attic. The project will help protect important artifacts and reduce energy costs.

A team of Andover partners, borrowing an idea from the National Park Service playbook, is creating a Junior Ranger Program. Designed to help third-graders’ “know your state and community” curriculum, the project will help 500 elementary school children discover the value of the Shawsheen River.

Rocky Morrison and the 13-year-old Clean River Project has removed more than 100,000 tons of debris, more than 8,000 tires and 72 motor vehicles from the Merrimack River and its shores. It will use grant money to provide volunteers with safety gear and training on how to deal with hazardous and dangerous debris, including the newest scourge—hypodermic needles.

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