NBLT Trail Blazing Couple Reach For the Sun

"After all that hard work, we wondered, what else could we do to make the world a better place?"

Note: Ed and Amber Zygmunt live in Laceyville, PA. they conserved their land through a conservation easement, and Ed is a former NBLT board member.

The year was 1999 when Amber and I became the first landowners in Susquehanna County to donate a conservation easement to the Back Mountain Regional Land Trust, widely known to everyone today, of course, as the North Branch Land Trust.

Like all NBLT easement donors, our objective was to preserve the conservation values of our 50-acre Auburn Township property for generations to come. Don’t tell anyone, but we also had a secret mission. We hoped to inspire other Susquehanna county landowners to follow our lead. It looks like our plan succeeded. Today NBLT has conserved four other precious properties in our beautiful county. Great work guys!

Over the years, Amber and I cooperated with a myriad of public agencies and private organizations to make our lives and our land more environmentally sustainable. With help from the PA Department of Environmental Protection, we constructed a 2-acre addition to our 10,000-year-old wetland to improve wildlife habitat, retain stormwater and recharge groundwater supplies. We signed-up with the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service to plant a 4-acre forested riparian buffer along the pretty little stream that bisects our property. Amber worked hard to establish a beautiful backyard wildlife habitat certified by the National Wildlife Federation. We cooperated with the Susquehanna Conservation District and our township supervisors to redesign the dirt road along our property so it no longer washed down the Susquehanna River with every thunderstorm. And we improved our own “habitat” by making our home as energy efficient as possible.

After all that hard work, we wondered, what

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The North Branch Land Trust works in partnership with landowners and their communities to conserve the natural, working, and scenic landscapes in Northeastern Pennsylvania that sustain us.

North Branch Land Trust
251 Huntsville-Idetown Road • Dallas, PA 18612
(570) 310-1781 • www.nblt.org

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NBLT Trail Blazing Couple Reach For the Sun
(Continued from front cover)

else could we do to make the world a better place? Our answer was a mere 93 million miles away. As NBLT’s Director of Development Barb Romanansky told us, we have accomplished another land trust milestone – we are the first NBLT easement donor to install a solar energy system!

Figuring out how to tap the clean, renewable energy from the sun was like formulating the language for our easement. Both took a lot of research and brainstorming. Being a seasoned do-it-yourselfer, I was up for the technological challenge.

My first step was to register for a solar energy course sponsored by one of the many other non-profit organizations that Amber and I support. Wayne county-based SEEDS (Sustainable Energy & Development Support) sponsor an annual DIY solar course as their way of speeding up the world’s inevitable transition to renewable energy.

One of SEEDS instructors was an electrical engineer, the other an electrical contractor who specializes in solar installations. Together they provided every sun-struck student a simple hands-on demonstration for a typical rooftop installation. They even offered to order the solar panels and related accessories for your project, as well as provide technical support for design and installation. On “graduation day” I was convinced it was finally time to reach for the sun.

With today’s plug and play solar technology, installing the system took less time than one sunrise to the next. The more challenging aspect of the project was securing the required electrical permit and coordinating the grid interconnection with our local utility. But once we flipped the switch on our 3.4-kilowatt “power plant”, every ray of sunshine became like manna from heaven.

Renewable energy, much like a conservation easement, is an investment that perhaps is not well suited for those who seek instant gratification. Amber and I always knew the true return from our conservation easement won’t be realized until long after we’ve left this world. Similarly, the return on investment for our solar system will be one kilowatt hour at a time. That’s OK, taking care of the planet is worth it.

Because our last name begins with the letters “Z” and “Y”, Amber and I often joke you can easily find us on the last page of the phone book. It’s no wonder we’re proud to be the first landowner in Susquehanna county to preserve our property with NBLT’s help. Now we’re NBLT’s first easement donor to harvest clean energy from the sun.

And yes, you might say we’re on another secret mission. Whether you hire a professional or do it yourself, we hope someday you too will reach for the sun!

Energizing the Solar System — Brian Ziedner, Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative and Ed Zygmunt

“Figuring out how to tap the clean, renewable energy from the sun was like formulating the language for our easement. Both took a lot of research and brainstorming.”

COMING TO
Wilkes-Barre this October 17
Author Richard Louv

Mr. Louv, is an internationally acclaimed author, co-founder and chairman emeritus of the Children & Nature Network.

See more on page five!
Over 1,000 Acres of Little Wilkes-Barre Mountain Conserved

North Branch Land Trust recently completed the acquisition and conservation of 1,131 acres of Little Wilkes-Barre Mountain in Newport Twp., Luzerne County. The Trust was successful in acquiring a DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program grant for 50 percent of the appraised value of the land plus a donation from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry to purchase the property from Earth Conservancy. Earth Conservancy donated the remaining 50 percent of the land value.

The property is part of the Penobscot Mountain Highlands, and the Trust is working to protect the entire length of these ecologically rich highlands from Mocanaqua to Arbutus Peak in Mountain Top. The Little Wilkes-Barre Mountain parcel hosts a native brook trout stream with falls and a number of rare plant species according to the most recent Natural Areas Inventory taken by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy on behalf of Luzerne County.

Upon closing on the project, North Branch deeded the property to the PA Bureau of Forestry where it will become part of the Pinchot State Forest system and be forever protected. North Branch thanks all the project partners for helping to conserve this and other important natural lands in our Northeastern Pennsylvania communities.

North Branch Land Trust Completes Its 5th Safari to Africa!

NBLT is fortunate to be friends with a South African conservationist, Joe Viljoen. Joe owns a 40,000-acre private nature preserve, ChaZen. He and his sons, Micha and Zen, have reclaimed these acres from over-grazed pasture land into a verdant oasis for dozens of animal species. Through their safari company, Africa Through Your Lens (ATYL), NBLT has been able to introduce over 60 people to international conservation and wildlife education. We have been hosting 1 to 2 safaris a year but because of the popularity and demand, we are expanding to 3 per year with the potential for even more.

These trips are win-win-win for everyone involved. Conservation wins, NBLT wins, and you as the traveler wins. How? Conservation wins because after expenses, the balance of the cost of the safari goes directly toward land and animal conservation in South Africa. NBLT and land conservation in NEPA wins because a portion of the safari cost stays right here and goes toward conservation projects in our own region! And you win because along with experiencing the trip of a lifetime, that portion of the cost that stays with NBLT is considered a donation from you so you receive the tax credit. See? Win, win, win!

There are 7 different itineraries from which to choose or ATYL will customize an itinerary for you. NBLT trips have gone to KwaZulu Natal and Sabi Sands both in South Africa, and most recently, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Those folks lucky enough to experience the ultimate trip this past June traveled to South Africa, Victoria Falls, Chobe National Park, and the extraordinary Okavango Delta. What an amazing experience! All trips are limited to 10-12 people so you receive incredible personal attention.

Barb Romanansky, NBLT’s Director of Development, makes all the arrangements for you so all you have to do is sit back and enjoy the experience! The accommodations and food are fabulous! And best of all, no inoculations are required! (Depending on the itinerary, malaria prevention meds may be necessary.)

Interested in this amazing opportunity? Contact Barb at 570-310-1781 or romanansky@nblt.org. These trips fill up within days of being announced . . . don't miss out!
Schedule of Events

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15**

To The Floodplains and Back Hike – Natural Lands’ Bear Creek Preserve
9:00-1:00 pm
47 Rabbit Run Lane
(off of Route 115)
Bear Creek Township, PA 18702
NBLT members: Free
Non-members: $10.00
*This hike is rated challenging to difficult.*

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25**

Full Moon Hike at Bear Creek Camp
6:00-9:00 pm
3601 Bear Creek Boulevard
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702
NBLT members: Free
Non-members: $10.00

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7**

7th Annual Taste the Local Harvest
5:00-8:00 pm
Huntsville Golf Club
1334 Market Street
Dallas, PA 18612
Tickets for adults: $60.00
Tickets for children 6-12: $15.00
Children 5 and under: Free

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17**

Mr. Louv is an internationally acclaimed author of nine books about the connection between family, nature, and community. He coined the term Nature-Deficit Disorder in his book Last Child In the Woods.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4**

Natural Creations
1:00-3:00 pm
Natural Lands’ Bear Creek Preserve
47 Rabbit Run Lane
(off of Route 115)
Bear Creek Twp., PA 18702
NBLT members: Free
Non-members: $10.00

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15**

NBLT Volunteer Appreciation Get-Together
6:00-8:00 pm
Sabatini’s Bottleshop and Bar
1925 Wyoming Avenue
Exeter, PA
*Presentation by Second Chance Wildlife Center, Tunkhannock.*

*All volunteers, save the date!*

Registration required for all events.
Register via [www.nblt.org/events](http://www.nblt.org/events), by email at smith@nblt.org, or call the NBLT office at 570-310-1781.
Renew Your Membership or Become a New Member!

Remember running barefoot outside on a hot summer day?
The bees buzzing around, the scent of newly-mown grass, packing up your PB&J sandwich and heading out to the woods to explore?
Catching lightening bugs at night?
Maybe going fishing with a favorite uncle?

Will your children, grandchildren, and future generations have the same opportunity to explore special places like you did?

Nature is so very important to children! Science has proven that children who have regular access to nature have greater creativity, better problem solving skills, enhanced cognitive abilities, higher academic performance, and reduced attention deficit. They also have improved eyesight, better social skills, more self-discipline, and reduced stress.

Conservation projects like Camp Kresge, the D&L Trail, and Little Wilkes-Barre Mountain opened thousands of acres for recreation and the opportunity for young and old to connect with nature. These projects were made possible through your generous membership donations.

Be part of the group that makes the next land conservation possible for our children, grandchildren, and their children. Renew your membership or become a new member today! Working together, we can conserve and protect the places in nature that we cherish and leave a legacy for all generations to come: the opportunity and ability for children to experience nature and have it always be part of their lives.

Please take a moment to use the membership form on the back page to renew your membership or become a new member. Every gift is highly appreciated. YOUR gift helps ensure that children will always be connected to nature!

Thank you!
I want to be part of conserving the special places of Northeastern Pennsylvania for our children and generations to come!

- $50
- $100
- $250
- $500
- $1,000
- Other _______________________

DONATE ONLINE AT: www.nblt.org

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"Nature is the Best Playground!"

Will your children, grandchildren, and future generations have the same opportunity to explore special outdoor places like you did?

Working together, we can conserve the places in nature that we cherish and leave a legacy for all generations to come: the opportunity and ability for children to experience nature and have it always be part of their lives.

If you are not a member, please consider a membership donation today. If you are already a member, thank you for your continuing support!

Please be a part of the group that makes the next conservation project possible and help ensure that children will always be connected with nature!

Become a member or renew your membership today!

YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address _________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip __________________________________________________

Email _____________________________ Phone ________________________

"The world is mud-luscious and puddle-wonderful."

– e. e. cummings

"Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism and the environment, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature."

– Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder