

# Mount Agamenticus Conservation Program 2024 Outreach and Education Report

*Naomi Densmore, Outreach and Education Coordinator*



Through immersive experiences, the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Program aims to promote responsible use of the area, instill a greater appreciation, love, and respect for the environment and inspire future advocates for protecting our natural resources.

The following report highlights annual and ongoing outreach and environmental education designed to help visitors understand the unique resources located here and the importance of responsible low-impact recreation as they set out to explore the area. Visitation has continued to increase, prompting much-needed infrastructure improvements. With these changes, visitor expectations have shifted. Community collaboration and a wider range of outreach efforts remains crucial to meeting those expectations while staying aligned with the Program's mission.



A welcoming fire burning brightly in the Learning Lodge in early November.

## *Highlights*

- Learning Lodge
  - The summit visitor center was open to the public every weekend from Memorial Day Weekend through October 20<sup>th</sup>, as well as on Fridays from the end of June through the first week of August.
    - Logged 4,138 visitors during open hours.
- Registered Groups
  - Worked with diverse groups to assist in planning visits to Mount A: hiking clubs, outdoor ceremonies, schools, scouts, summer camps, etc.
    - 62 registered groups with 2,894 people.

- 36 groups identified as schools or summer camps with 966 students/campers exploring Learning Lodge exhibits and 10 of those groups participating in staff-led programs.
- Public Programming
  - Led 20 public programs including bimonthly partner programs with the Center for Wildlife and both guided walks and indoor environmental education programs for York's Center for Active Living. Program staff were also joined by Great Works Regional Land Trust for our annual Three Hill Hike in November as well as York Land Trust and York and Kittery Water Districts for a new guided hike program from the Summit of First Hill to Highland Farm!
  - Led "Wild Wonders" day camp for 12 campers ages 5-8 at summit for four days in August.



A spring guided hike with CAL members.



An evening program with the Center for Wildlife in June and a hike with Wild Wonders campers in August.



- Special Events
  - CRES Waterpalooza
    - Program staff worked with the York and Kittery Water Districts, York Sewer District, and the York School Department to educate grade 2-4 students from Coastal Ridge Elementary School about water usage.
  - Big A 50K
    - This volunteer-run trail race benefiting the Conservation Program returned for a 13<sup>th</sup> year with 89 participants.
  - Annual Trail Challenge
    - The Trail Challenge saw 79 5K and 1 Mile course finishers in its 8<sup>th</sup> year.
  - Mayor's Monarch Pledge
    - As part of the Town of York's ongoing commitment to the [Mayor's Monarch Pledge](#), worked on initiatives to educate York residents about how to create and protect pollinator habitat.
      - Hosted "seed bomb" workshops with local area students to promote growth of native flowering plants.
      - Hosted native Milkweed seed collection and distribution efforts and distributed Milkweed plants and seeds to the community at no cost.



Common Milkweed grown from seeds collected at the summit, ready for community members to take home.

- Online Presence
  - Maintained [Agamenticus.org](http://Agamenticus.org) website; developed content for and managed social media accounts and e-mail distribution list; produced press releases and other media with program listings, news, and updates.
  - Daily correspondence with visitors via online contact form and inquiries over social media accounts and phone.

- Researched and contacted third-party/crowdsourced websites and apps to ensure information on Mount Agamenticus remains accurate and up to date.
- Worked with the Friends of Mount Agamenticus 501(c)(3) to promote fundraising and volunteer efforts and to produce and distribute quarterly Summit View newsletter.
- On-site Information, Interpretation, and Education
  - Installed and maintained seasonal StoryWalk.
  - Maintained educational and promotional content for trail boxes and bulletin boards.
  - Assisted in the design of new interpretive panels for summit and base of First Hill.
- Annual Visitor Use Survey
  - 520 groups (1205 visitors) were surveyed during in-person sessions; an additional 32 surveys were completed online.
  - Information is gathered to track trends and evaluate public opinion about the area. For a full survey report, please see Mount Agamenticus *Visitor Use Survey Results 2024*.
- Gift Shop
  - Gift Shop sales, both in-person and online, support outreach and education efforts in the Learning Lodge and beyond.
  - Care is made to select inventory that is in alignment with mission and vision, which includes a variety of sustainably and locally produced or printed items.
  - A seasonal “pop up” gift shop was open in November and December for holiday shopping.



Inaugural Guided Mount A Summit to Highland Farm Hike.