

SCRIPT OF THANKS: October 19, 2024 Longevity Bench Walk Celebration, Masconomo Park 10am.

Good morning, I welcome you all here this morning to celebrate the culmination of the Bench Walk Challenge, sponsored by the Longevity Bench Project this summer.

I am Lisa Bonneville, President of the LBP and I am very humbled by the support our Bench Project has received in six years since it was launched in 2018. Placing benches every half mile along 11 neighborhood loops was a goal that has attracted over 300 donors who have supported us with their dollars and others with their time – and the community with in-kind donations – and town committee and board members whose engagement and approvals have brought us to this day – brought us to this celebration. Today, that includes the Laughing Gull Café, with thanks to Bruce and Dede Warren for generously contributing the warm coffee and the first two gifts to our Hall of Fame inductees.

We are often asked about the process involved in adding a bench to the network, from “yes, I’d like to donate a bench” to installation. Every step is supported by many hearts and many helpful hands. Today, we want to thank those individuals and express our appreciation. On a Saturday, many are not able to be here but we will call their names just the same – and deliver their Certificate of Appreciation in person.

In May, we hosted a Donor Party and thanked our bench donors and Project sponsors. **Today we celebrate the production team.**

Each bench:

- a. begins with a donor(s) and each has a unique story of tribute, caring for others, desire to contribute to this network of benches for the benefit of the whole town
- b. needs a site - so approvals for each site are gathered from the property owner, private or town land; the **DPW** (including **Director, Chuck Dam, Engineer, Nate Desrosiers** and roads “guru”, **Sean** who knows where every snow bank will be plowed; and Jeffreys Creek Land Contractors, **John Filias** Owner; the town **Conservation Commission**, chaired by **Steve Gang** whose inspection team will visit the site to confirm compliance on distance from wetland; and **Greg Federspiel, Town Manager**, for shepherding our presentations for final approvals to the **5-member Select Board**, ably chaired now by Ann Harrison but involving **all selected persons since 2018**.
- c. has a plaque and text for each bench is determined by the donor and property owner. The first line is always: A Longevity Bench
The second line is: A Place to Rest While Taking a Walk
- d. is ordered from our sponsoring vendor and manufactured to meet our uniquely designed ADA specifications.
- e. spends about 4 months in production, is crated and shipped
- f. within the month before the bench is due to ship, the concrete pad is laid and all is prepared for installation.
- g. in some cases, we have had the honor of celebrating bench “openings” with the donors, even the blessing of benches by a local priest.
- h. has received excellent visibility in the local media; the Manchester Cricket, the Gloucester Daily Times, the TIDE, the COA monthly newsletters and numerous Facebook friends, in addition to our own website, longevitybenchproject.org
- i. brought together this wonderful team, for which we have been very blessed.

Additional certificates go to:

Nancy Hammond, Director of Senior Services, COA – half page coverage in monthly newsletters “Seniors by the Sea”, May to October and support from the very start with all our initiatives.

Cheryl Marshall, Director of Parks & Recreation – collaboration and support for this Challenge, and for sending our announcements to THE TIDE.

To our local media for their attention to our Project and Bench Walks over the entire 6 years and especially during this summer, helping us to inform walkers to join in.

Erika Brown, Editor, the Manchester Cricket.

Stephen Hagan, Reporter, and all the community news staff, Gloucester Daily Times.

The Longevity Project Board of Directors deserves recognition too. They have given much of themselves to move the Project to its goal. They are the heart of the Bench Project, as we keep the goal front and center.

This year, from May until October 19, we initiated the “**Bench Walk Challenge**” to introduce residents of Manchester to all 26 Longevity Benches by sponsoring guided walks twice per month along the eleven neighborhood loops.

The **WALK LEADERS** generously volunteered their time and represented a number of town committees that have parallel goals; their unique gift was a GREEN T-SHIRT!!

- Cheryl Marshall, Director of Parks & Recreation
- Jody Morse and Martha Chapman, from the Manchester Friends of Trees
- Terry Cowman, Dan Tieger and Nick de Sherbinin from the Bike and Pedestrian Committee
- Caitlin Eppes from the ADA Advisory Committee
- Spencer Feuerbach, son of our Board Member, Linda Feuerbach
- Dr. Cynthia Bjorlie, Director of North Shore Adult Foster Care
- OUR OWN BOARD MEMBERS: Linda Feuerbach, Gillian Kellogg, Sonne Bialy, Susan Harrington, Jane Metrano and Lisa Bonneville

WHAT DID OUR BENCH WALKS ACCOMPLISH?

Manchester residents and friends were introduced to each bench, the donor plaques were read, unique stories were shared about bench donors, brief history lessons were read about selected buildings and town personalities along the loops – some generated through research at the MBTS Museum, and trees were identified along the way. Each walk was a very special and enjoyable experience for all.

And now, the Board Members and I want to celebrate those who have visited all 26 benches.

We are here today to induct those who accepted the challenge and reached all **26 BENCHES INTO THE LONGEVITY BENCH PROJECT HALL OF FAME. Three walkers were inducted: Laurie McCoy, Gillian Kellogg and George Davis. Thank you and congratulations!**