

Farmington Valley Trails Council *Greenway News*

Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails

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Annual Meeting is Friday, Nov. 13 at Avon Senior Center

The Farmington Valley Trails Council will hold its Annual Meeting on Friday, November 13, 2026 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. at the Avon Senior Center, 635 West Avon Road, Avon. Admission is free, and refreshments will be served.

The guest speaker is Peter Sutton, bicycle and pedestrian program coordinator for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

Trails council board members look forward to seeing you there.

Supporting FVTC Helps the Trail

By Barbara Collins, President, FVTC

Dear Trail Friend,

Well summer is coming to a close. We sure have had some interesting weather. Hopefully the super-hot, humid weather and torrential rain has not kept you from enjoying our beautiful trails.

The weather did cause several cancellations of the Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) Wednesday night bike rides, which I hope you had an opportunity to participate in. They were free and a lovely way to see various sections of the trail. FVTC Vice President Laura Russotto led most rides, and Treasurer Tony Russotto would ride sweep, so a rider could go as slow or fast as they wanted and, with notice, could leave or extend the ride if desired. Look for our Facebook and website next spring to learn when the rides will resume.

The trail is still moving towards completion, although most of the activity has been in the southern section of the trail. New Haven and Southington both opened new sections. Plainville is also moving, but alas not as fast. If you want to learn more about all the changes, please come to our Annual Meeting on November 13 at the Avon Senior Center. We always have an interesting speaker, and it gives you as a member an opportunity to speak to Board members about any issues you see on the trail, along with enjoying some food and drinks which is our small thank you for your support.

As I have written before and you can see from the other articles in this newsletter, safety is one of our major concerns. For that reason, FVTC sells bright yellow shirts (short and long sleeves) to ensure that our members can be seen when they are out on the trail or even walking around their neighborhood. This year FVTC is also providing a bright green short-sleeved shirt to anyone who joins or renews their membership.

FVTC has no paid staff, so every cent we obtain through dues or donations goes towards the trail. You hopefully have seen the bike repair stations and the kiosks around the trail along with a water fountain here or there. All are provided with town support to enhance your trail experience. FVTC also provides small grants to towns to help with its maintenance of the trail. In some locations and with town approval people can also purchase a bench in honor of a loved one. These benefits are because of your dues money.

The need for your contributions will continue even after Plainville is done because maintenance and improvements will also continue. FVTC cannot thank you enough.

Until October we will continue to have a table at the Collinsville Farmers Market. Please stop by and say hello.

Weekly Casual Trail Rides Hosted by FVTC

This season the Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) again held its weekly Wednesday evening casual ride from June through early September. Each week the ride started at a different trail parking lot so riders could enjoy many sections of the trail. July's weather wasn't cooperative and a few rides were cancelled.

The rides were led by Laura Russotto, vice president, and Tony Russotto, treasurer. Norm Berg, secretary, and Barbara Collins, president, were in attendance as well. We enjoyed getting to know other riders, many of which came out to ride with us each week. On one of our weekly rides, riders learned how to navigate through a tricky area from Canton into West Simsbury. Riders followed the trail to Lawton Road where the trail ends but continued to follow the on-road section from Lawton, to Dry Bridge Road to Notch Road to West Mountain Road where riders can rejoin the off-road trail into Town Forest.

Collins said, "I was looking to get away to have a fun and safe ride on my bike, so I joined the Wednesday Night Rides. I only made three of the rides, but had a blast every time. One ride was on the River Trail to Collinsville, another leaving from Avon to Plainville, and another leaving from Sperry Park. The rides were a great way to know and appreciate the assets known as the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and the Farmington River Trail."

We look forward to restarting these weekly rides again next June. We hope to see you there.

American Flatbread Fundraiser Benefits the Trail

The Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) Board of Directors held another successful benefit evening at American Flatbread in the Canton Shops in Canton on Tuesday, July 21. It was great to see friends from the cycling community and FVTC members come to see us despite the downpours and threat of storms.

American Flatbread graciously donates a portion of all flatbread sales to benefit organizations like FVTC. We want to thank all of the staff at American Flatbread for their continued support. Also, we would like to thank those that donated raffle prizes and other giveaways.

Prizes included a gift certificate from Benidorm Bike of Canton, trail guide books from the East Coast Greenway Alliance, bicycle tune-up from Ridgeline Bikes of Avon, a cooking class certificate from Terry Walters of Avon, swag from Watch for Me CT, two hand-made bird houses from Richard Moynihan, and a garden pack, flower vase/soap/towel set and beautiful potted plant from Ryan Family Flower Farm in Simsbury.

All donations and contributions go to the trail and help us provide grants to the town on the trail funding construction and maintenance projects.

Avon Bike Parade Celebrates Community and Cycling

The Farmington Valley Trails Council was proud to participate in the Avon 250 Bike Parade on July 9. Residents of all ages rode their bikes as part of the festive celebration of the town's history and community spirit.

Cyclists decorated their bicycles with patriotic colors and gathered for a fun, family-friendly ride that highlighted the joy of bicycling and the importance of safe, connected trails. Children who successfully completed the ride from Pine Grove School to Sycamore Hills Recreation Area were handed bicycle bells in celebration of their accomplishment. The event was also energized by live music from a local favorite, Mass Confusion, which added to the festive atmosphere.

As advocates for improving safe use of the Farmington Valley's trail network, we were especially pleased to see so many people enjoying a community event on two wheels. We hope the excitement generated by the parade inspires even more residents to explore the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and the many local pathways that make our region such a wonderful place to walk, bike, and recreate.

Thank you to the Town of Avon Recreation and Parks Department, the volunteers from Bike Walk Avon CT and the Avon Town Council, and everyone who participated in making the Avon 250 Bike Parade such a memorable part of our nation's 250 celebration.

Be Safe, Be Seen, Be Visible on Trails and Roads

As summer gives way to fall, the days are getting shorter – and that means many of us are walking and bicycling in lower-light conditions. Whether you're heading out for an early-morning ride, an evening walk, or simply commuting by bike, being visible is an important part of staying safe.

For bicyclists, a white front light and red rear light can make a big difference in helping drivers and other trail users see you – and it's the law! Reflective clothing, ankle bands, vests, and other reflective gear can provide additional visibility, especially when headlights are approaching. Remember that being visible isn't just about seeing where you're going – it's about making sure others can see you, too.

Walkers and runners can also take simple steps to stand out. Bright or reflective clothing, a flashlight or headlamp, and reflective accessories can help drivers recognize you sooner. When walking along a road, use sidewalks or paths when available and stay alert around driveways, intersections, and crossings.

Quick Visibility Tips

- **Light up:** Use a front light, rear light, and side reflectors when bicycling in low light.
- **Reflect:** Wear reflective or brightly colored clothing and accessories.
- **Be predictable:** Follow the rules of the road and trail, and signal before turning or changing direction.
- **Stay alert:** Keep your attention on your surroundings, particularly near intersections and crossings.
- **Share the trail:** Give other trail users plenty of warning when passing.
- **Check your gear:** Before heading out, make sure your lights are charged and working properly.

On shared-use trails like ours, visibility helps everyone. Keep lights pointed where they illuminate the path without blinding approaching users, and remember that cyclists and pedestrians may have very different speeds and stopping distances. A friendly greeting or passing signal can also help prevent surprises.

As we enjoy the beautiful colors and cooler temperatures of autumn, let's make visibility part of our routine. Light up, reflect, stay alert – and help make every trip on foot or by bike a safer one.



Children and adults alike enjoyed the Avon 250 Bike Parade on July 9, 2026.
Photo by Debbie Thibodeau

Trail Friends



THE FARMINGTON CANAL
HERITAGE TRAIL



FVTC DIRECTORS

Barbara Collins,
President

Laura Rusotto, VP
Tony Rusotto Treasurer

Norm Berg, Sect'y

Bruce Donald

Lisa Fernandez

Alan Blasenstein

Tim Bowman

Sherry Dwyer

Ron Goralski

Fran Gurtman

Joy Himmelfarb

David Kinead

Diana Moody

Amy Watkins

Founder:

Preston Reed
(1916-2013)

Tips for Summer Safety on the Trail

By Amy Watkins, MPH

Summer is one of the best times to enjoy the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, but warm weather also brings a few seasonal hazards. With a little preparation, you can help ensure every outing is safe and enjoyable.

Beat the Heat. Plan your walk or ride during the cooler morning or evening hours whenever possible. Drink plenty of water before, during, and after your trip, wear light-colored, breathable clothing, and apply sunscreen. If you or a companion begins to feel dizzy, unusually tired, nauseated, or develop a headache, move to a shaded area, cool down, and hydrate immediately.

Protect Yourself from Ticks and Mosquitoes. Apply an EPA-registered insect repellent and consider wearing long sleeves or light-colored clothing to make ticks easier to spot. After spending time on the trail, perform a thorough tick check and remove any attached ticks promptly. Mosquitoes are most active around dawn and dusk, so take extra precautions if you're out during those times.

Watch for Poison Ivy. Remember the old saying, "Leaves of three, let it be." Stay on marked trails and avoid brushing against vegetation along the trail's edge. If you think you have come into contact with poison ivy, wash the exposed skin as soon as possible with soap and water.

Be Weather Aware. Summer storms can develop quickly. Check the forecast before heading out, and if you hear thunder or see darkening skies, head for shelter immediately. Avoid standing under isolated trees or remaining in open areas during a thunderstorm. Carry a charged cell phone and let someone know your planned route if you're heading out for a longer ride or walk.

A few minutes of preparation can make all the difference. By staying hydrated, protecting yourself from insects and plants, and keeping an eye on the weather, you'll help ensure a safe and enjoyable summer on the Farmington Valley Trails.

The Summer Safety Checklist

Before you head out, remember these five essentials:

Water: Bring more than you think you'll need.

Bug Protection: Apply insect repellent to help guard against ticks and mosquitoes.

Sun Protection: Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat.

Phone: Carry a fully charged cell phone for emergencies and weather updates.

Weather Check: Look at the forecast before you leave and head back if storms are approaching.

Amy Watkins, MPH, is Director of Safe Kids Connecticut, which is a program of Connecticut Children's Injury Prevention Center.

ABOUT THE FVTC

This publication is written and formatted by volunteers. The Farmington Valley Trails Council is a 501(c)(3) CT not-for-profit corporation dedicated to advocacy, education, beautification and building multi-use trails in the Farmington Valley of Connecticut. Contributions to the FVTC are generally tax-deductible.

This newsletter is available electronically, or printed and distributed by our friends at The Arc of Farmington Valley (FAVARH).
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Become an FVTC Member!

Check desired box(es) and enclose membership fee:



- ☐ \$20 Senior 65+
- ☐ \$25 Single
- ☐ \$40 Family
- ☐ \$100 Friend
- ☐ \$500 Sustaining Member
- ☐ \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor
- ☐ Corporate Matching Donation

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (home) _____ (cell) _____

E-mail _____

Would you like to be contacted for volunteer opportunities? Y / N

Detach and mail to FVTC, P.O. Box 576, Tariffville, CT 06081.

