

Please let us introduce Jonah and his family's story of their involvement, the impact that Schiff Nature Preserve has made on their lives, and on Jonah in particular.

Jonah's first exposure to Schiff Nature Preserve was by way of participation in the Summer Nature Program back in August of 2016. Jonah was 5 years old. Jonah's mom, Jennifer, tells us that she saw a post about the summer program on "Next Door". The family had lived in Bedminster since 2007 before moving to Gladstone in 2014, but had never known about Schiff. Although he only attended the summer program that year, attending that one summer unlocked his love of the outdoors, hiking in the woods, and studying wildlife. It also led to further summer adventures in other nature camps and eventually joining the Cub Scouts. Currently a teenager, Jonah is involved in the Boy Scouts. Schiff had since become a regular part of their weekends with informal family hikes on the property. The programs offered, such as the weekly after school program and Full Moon Hikes led by Schiff trustee Janis Slutsky, were an opportunity for both Jonah and the whole family to enjoy and appreciate Schiff. They also attended the maple sugaring program and participated in several volunteer work sessions. Jonah and his father, Sasha, did additional work with Janis and members of the Conservation & Stewardship Committee combating invasive species. One special stand out memory is working with Ken and Janis on various Sundays hacking and slashing at Aurelia and Japanese Knotweed during the summer heat; hard and sweaty work, but well worth the effort. Jonah and his family applaud the staff and trustees for always providing a welcoming environment whether it was through diverse programming or a friendly and knowledgeable approach to working with the public and children.

In particular, the time during Covid prompted their increased participation. During such a scary and unstable time for young children, Schiff became a familiar place for Jonah to go and spend time with friends, fellow Scouts, and family during these formative years. Subsequently, Jonah opted to conduct his Scouting Arrow of Light ceremony at Schiff which took place in April of 2021. Having the ceremony outdoors at the Lean To made it special.

When asked how his participation in these programs helped form his thinking on the environment, Jonah felt his time at Schiff cemented his belief that nature offers personal restoration and tranquility. Now at 14, Jonah often speaks of how much peace and relaxation he finds in nature while he goes hiking, biking, fishing or paddleboarding. His knowledge and appreciation of the conservation efforts of organizations like Schiff has grown as a result. Involvement in these programs at Schiff also helped Jonah see that nature is not just a source of personal enrichment, but can also be a way to connect with others. Nature can be the backdrop for social experience—a chance to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships while spending time together outdoors. Schiff

offers us unique opportunities to connect with each other in nature, and provides educational and recreational programming that brings people together.

When the topic of Jonah's thinking on service, volunteer work and philanthropy was raised, the family reflected on the various volunteer work requirements of school districts and Scouting. While some mention of these tasks might elicit complaints from a child, especially when hard, physical work is involved, Jonah is always happy to pitch in. The family suspects that with so much involvement at Schiff, Jonah has garnered a mindset that nature is a communal reward and responsibility. He has embraced the notion that we are all enjoying nature and therefore, we are all responsible to help in its conservation. Schiff has taught him that service work is not something to just "get done" because you have to, it is a chance to do your part and feel good that you contributed.

We are so thankful to Jennifer, Sasha, and Jonah for taking the time to work with us on this segment and hope it resonates and inspires others to engage and participate in the programs and activities offered at Schiff Nature Preserve. We encourage our followers and readers to come enjoy what Schiff has to offer and support Schiff in any and all ways possible.

We close this Spotlight on the Impact of Schiff with some final words directly from Jonah himself. When asked how his participation in Schiff programs has helped to form the person he is today, Jonah provided this wonderful quote below:

"My participation in Schiff has allowed me to, throughout my life, be connected to nature and view it in a positive light. Schiff has informed me of the positive actions of conservation and good life choices to make. It has been a place of joy and learning for me. In a world so driven by technology it is nice to step back into nature. That place is Schiff. Schiff is a place of comfort and helped form so many good moments. It helps me think about the environment and turn my impact on it positive. Schiff also has been a place of mental growth as I learn about new plants and animals. It helped drive my curiosity and fuel my interests."



