

Building a bridge to Scouting's top rank

By Timothy Churchill , Exeter Newsletter, March 5, 2005

NEWMARKET - Thanks to the ingenuity and leadership of Newmarket Boy Scout Zach Adamczyk, residents can now access a prime piece of conservation land without tramping through delicate wetlands.

A 32-foot bridge, Adamczyk's Eagle Scout project begins in a parking lot, rises over the swath of protected wetlands, and delivers its users onto the 160-acre Grapevine Hill/Tuttle Swamp conservation area on Grant Road. The town's Open Space Commission purchased the acreage in 2003.

"Before the bridge, people would either walk through the muddy wetland or avoid that area all together," Robert Pruyne, a member of the Open Space and Conservation commissions, said in an e-mail message. Pruyne supervised the building process.



Zachary Adamczyk stands on his completed 32-foot bridge on Grapevine Hill in Newmarket. The bridge was Adamczyk's project for becoming an Eagle Scout.

Photo by Jamie Cohen

Adamczyk, a thoughtful 18 year old, moved with his family to Durham last year but decided to stay with his Newmarket Boy Scout troop, where he has been a member for 10 years. He is home-schooled part-time, and is a senior at Oyster River High School..

A self-described "active kid" with three years of training in wood shop, Adamczyk said he knew he "didn't want to do anything small" for his Eagle Scout project.

Though "not necessarily an active environmentalist," he does "like the outdoors to be there." He quickly cottoned to the bridge idea when Hunter Brownlie of the Open Space Commission pitched it to him last October.

After he decided to take on the project, he went to the Conservation Commission with his proposal. Members liked the idea, and when Adamczyk presented a bridge design, the commission gave him a green light and a \$3,000 allowance for building materials (he would end up using less than half that amount).

Adamczyk also received approval from the Open Space Commission and Dan Vincent, the town's code enforcement officer, as well as a permit from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. Pruyne said the DES acknowledged that Adamczyk's design was better than the plan specified by its own erosion-control manual.

Because of the sensitive nature of the land his bridge traverses, Adamczyk knew he should use low-impact bridge foundations. After doing some research, he decided to go with a type of pin foundation – known as "diamond pier" for

its shape – conducive to wetland building because it extends deep into the earth without digging large holes. He found exactly what he was looking for at a Laconia retailer called Stargaze Pool and Spas.

The building began on Feb. 11 in the town garage on Young's Lane. "There was no going back to the drawing board once I began," Adamczyk said, because, in compliance with Boy Scout rules, he had to complete the bridge before his 18th birthday.

"Zach worked like a man on a mission," Pruyne said, tapping the last nail and sanding the last rail on Feb. 24, the day before his birthday. That afternoon the bridge was hauled out to the site. Because Adamczyk could only use manpower in the snow-covered wetlands area, Pruyne said, he assembled a group of people to help him drag the 16-footspan toboggan-style and then place it upon the girders.

"As we lifted the span into place on the girders and secured it," Pruyne said, "I saw the look of satisfaction on Zack's face. Zack gave me a high five and I gave him 'a job well done.'"

The hard work was over; what remained for Adamczyk was attaching the bridge's 38-inch-high railing system and adding eight-foot handicap-accessible ramps on each end. A minor problem was found with the bridge's balusters, and Adamczyk was granted a three-month extension to remedy it.

Adamczyk said there was something deeply satisfying about the bridge's solidity and durability. "I really like making stuff that ends up being there a couple years later," he said. His scoutmaster, Robert Clapp, said Adamczyk had learned "planning capabilities" and "leadership" from the design and building process. "Zach pretty much did the project on his own," he said.

Clapp added that the final product was "a good bridge," and described Adamczyk as "a person who likes to explore and jump into things." Before Adamczyk advances to the level of Eagle Scout, the highest rank in scouting, he must undergo an exhaustive interview concerning his Scouting experience called the Eagle Board of Review. The board, comprising up to six people, must accept an applicant unanimously. Clapp said there is little doubt Adamczyk will attain Eagle status.

Adamczyk, who will take a year off after school and possibly study outdoor education in college, is pleased with not only how his project turned out, but with certain skills and character traits he cultivated.

Among other things, he said he learned leadership, planning, organization and "a lot about money management."

"I'm really happy that I ended up doing the bridge over anything else," Adamczyk said. "I'd definitely do it again," he added.