

# Youth Corps improving Howard Park

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SHAFTSBURY -- A team of young people with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps has just begun two weeks of work improving the Tilgner Trail at Howard Park.

The seven young people, all wearing green VYCC work shirts, attended Monday's Select Board meeting and received a round of applause.

"We were charged by the Select Board to revitalize Howard Park," said Deena Ruege, recording secretary of the Recreation Committee. "With this in mind we set about to make an improved community park, which could be enjoyed by all ages. We envisioned this as a welcome destination, not just a hidden treasure."

The committee administered a town wide survey on recreation in November 2007. The committee has used that as a guide on how to proceed, she said.

One thing apparent from the survey is that people love to walk: "And they wanted to see Tilgner Trail restored." So this became a top priority, Ruege said.

Paul Schwartzkopf, co-leader of the VYCC crew, said the group is putting in an information kiosk at the trail head, building a bridge on the trail over a stream, repairing a wetland boardwalk on the trail and doing general grading improvements on the trail to eliminate tripping hazards.

The group also will be dealing with some wet spots on the trail and will be building an educational amphitheater with rough logs. Schwartzkopf lives in Burlington but is originally from St. Louis. Co-leader Becky Pinkus is from Illinois. The other members of the group were from Wallingford, Royalton, Bakersfield, St. Johnsbury and Newport.

Before coming to Shaftsbury they worked on a similar project in Norwich. The crew will be done for the summer after the Shaftsbury project is complete, but Schwartzkopf and Pinkus will lead another crew after that. According to its Web site, [www.vycc.org](http://www.vycc.org), the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps "is a non-profit youth, leadership, service, conservation, and education organization that instills in individuals the values of personal responsibility, hard work, education, and respect for the environment."

The organization hires young people from ages 16 to 24 "who work and study together under adult leadership to complete high-priority conservation projects such as state park management, trail maintenance, and backcountry construction."

The crew's work in Shaftsbury is funded by a state Forest and Parks grant and a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps grant, with some in-kind administrative support from the town, said Select Board member Karen Mellinger.

"You're just a great group to work with," she said to the group of young people, noting that Pinkus and Schwartzkopf designed the kiosk that will be installed.