

## Boy Scout Builds Walking Trail for Woodland Pond at New Paltz Residents

June 09, 2014



Stevie Branche, a Boy Scout working toward Eagle Scout status, is constructing Branche trail, an extension of a current trail at Woodland Pond at New Paltz.

Clearing the land with his tools in hand, Stevie Branche, a 17-year-old boy scout, is extending a walking a trail for residents at Woodland Pond at New Paltz. Last year, the residents raised funds to build a viewing platform and a small trail that accesses it from the south side of the campus. Branche's addition will create a continuous loop for residents to enjoy. Completing this service project will bring Branche one step closer to fulfilling the requirements for Eagle Scout status. Branche typically works on the project on

Saturday mornings and sometimes after school.

"My mom works at Woodland Pond, and I got the idea for this project from her," said Branche. "She had talked of the current trail and how the residents hoped the trail would be extended to make a complete loop around the community. Wanting to give back to seniors, I thought this project would be appreciated by the residents at Woodland Pond. The new trail will give them the opportunity to go outside, observe nature and get exercise. Once the troop council approved my project, I set to work on it in the fall of 2013."

Branche has carefully planned the design of the trail to make sure it accommodates all levels of physical mobility and stamina. He and fellow scouts have cleared dense forest, brush, weeds, roots and hazardous objects away from the path, smoothed the land and lined the trail with soft dirt for easy treading. Some of the tools and supplies, such as mulch, dirt, and posts for signs and trail-markers, were purchased and some of it was donated.

"When I moved here, I had envisioned turning the old ATV trails in the

woods into a walking trail for residents, staff, friends and families of Woodland Pond to use," said Douglas McBride, a resident of Woodland Pond. "The beaver pond was not easily viewed from the ATV trails that ran through the woods, so we built a viewing platform so residents could enjoy the pond from a safe and comfortable spot. We raised funds and worked with the Woodland Pond Foundation to build a viewing platform and a small trail leading to the scenic spot. With that project completed, we were hopeful that the other part of the trail we had envisioned would come next. When Stevie approached us with his ambitious idea, we gladly accepted his offer to help. He and his fellow scouts have done a marvelous job. We cannot wait to see the finished result."

Branche selected this act of service as part of the requirements for advancement to Eagle Scout status, the highest rank one can achieve in Boy Scouts. In addition to the community service project, Branche is required to complete merit badges, have a position of leadership in the troop, and participate in troop meetings, activities and events by the time he turns 18. He has been working toward this goal since joining Boy Scouts. Branche will be the first in his family to achieve this honor. Less than one percent of Boy Scouts achieve the Eagle Scout title.